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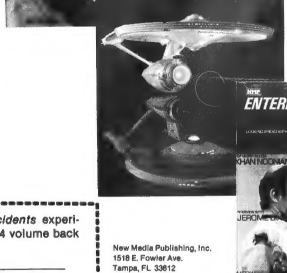

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#29
May 1984

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FEATURES

MARVEL SUPERHEROES: THE SECRET WARS

Conceived by Editor-In Chief, Jim Shooter, **The Secret Wars** is a complex series, which will effect over 56 characters in the Marvel Universe. Team members will change, costumes will alter and readers will see the worse side of heroes and the better side of villains. To get the behind the scene scoop on this undertaking, **Comics Feature** interviewed Jim Shooter, writer, Tom DeFalco and Michael Hobson, editors and Mike Zeck, artist. How was this fantastically intricate series coordinated? Come behind the scenes with the best Marvel has to offer to find out.

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On The Cover:
The cover for **The Secret Wars #1**. Artwork is by the book artist, Mike Zeck and color is by **Comics Feature**'s own editor and art director, Robert Lewis. A larger, full color insert can be found in the center of this book, suitable as a poster. Our thanks to Marvel for supplying us with the art work. All characters copyrighted Marvel Comics.

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EDITORIAL

By Hal Schuster

This might not be the best place for this.

In fact, there might not be a best place for this at all. You see, yesterday I finally saw the movie **Reds.** I had avoided this movie when it was first released as I was warned that it was nothing but weakly disguised Communist propaganda in the form of popular entertainment. Disliking propaganda pieces of all types, I didn't feel like putting down my hard-earned cash for something that would just anger me. But recently it was offered by TMC and since I wouldn't have to do any more than turn on the channel I decided to watch the program. It was very well done, very interesting and not propagandistic by any stretch of the imagination.

The thrust of the movie is what becomes of an idealistic young couple who see their dream become a reality during the Russian Revolution of 1917 only to watch it be revealed as the nightmare it had always been. Remember that before the fall of the Tsar of all of the Russias no nation on earth had ever tried to actually implement Marx' system in any concerted way. Much as our country was an experiment in a liberal Republic, the Soviet Union was the showpiece of the "new socialism" which would lead to the "new man". Before that there was nothing but idealistic phrases which spoke of the dictatorship of the proletariat [the working man] and the withering away of government. A new and Communist world, it was said in some circles, would mean the end of war [in fact it did signal Russia's withdrawal from World War I] and a rebirth of the spirit of man.

The reality was that the young journalist's words were changed without his knowledge, troops were paraded outside his window and a free press was utterly destroyed. When he was making speeches on behalf of Communism to Middle Eastern nations his words were changed from "class warfare" to "a holy war against the Western infidel" and his friend, Eugene O'Neill, described the new force as "a virulent strain of Irish Catholicism".

In other words, the reality isn't what the dream promised. It is worse than anything that has previously existed and in the name of reform men are destroyed, freedoms crushed and the very concept of peace and liberty perverted to a new meaning. This strikes close to home with both the character and myself since my profession is working with the written word [now carefully regulated by the new Soviet regime], the spoken word [now altered without the approval of the speaker] and ideas [now perverted to make their meaning directly opposite of what is in fact intended]. Perhaps no other type of worker is as effected as one who operates in the information industries, the so-called new technologies of the modern world. But all walks of life are changed and radically worsened by this new force.

We often laugh when we hear the phrase "Truth, Justice and the American Way" as the motive force for Superman or look at the flag bedecked costume of that superpatriot Captain America, but perhaps they know something which we don't. Or perhaps they remember what we'd rather forget. Even many writers try to subtly alter the meaning of the concepts they propel [such as the latest issue of **What If** with its so-called enlightened version of Cap's patriotism].

Let us give pause to consider what we have here in our country and in fact in all of the children of British democracy [such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, etc.], and to consider the alternative. Sometimes a movie can be a real eyeopener and can help us to understand what we want in all of our entertainment.

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FEATURE NEWS

TAKEOVER FIGHT AT DC PARENT
News Analysis by Hal Schuster

DC Comics parent corporation, Warner Communications, is currently in the throes of a real knock-down, drag-out battle over the future of the company and by implication, the future of DC Comics. A stockholder fight is brewing which should make the Cadence battles of a year past seem like a pillow fight. Although the takeover attempt is being waged primarily for ownership of the firm's backlist of successful films, all units of the corporation will be changed in their turn. If a change takes place at the top levels DC Comics cannot remain uneffected.

According to **The Economist**, perhaps the world's leading newsweekly, "Mr. Rupert Murdoch, the Australian publisher, still likes to shock. This week, he announced plans to raise his stake in the troubled entertainment conglomerate Warner Communications from 7% to at least 25% and, perhaps, to 49.9%.

"Warner's chairman, Mr. Steven Ross, has been trying to head him off. In response to Mr. Murdoch's purchase of 7% of Warner's stock for nearly $100,000,000 late in 1983 (which made him the largest single shareholder) Warner announced a deal on December 29th with a company called Chris-Craft. Under the deal, which seems likely to go through, 19% of Warner's voting stock would go to Chris-Craft in return for a 42.5% stake for Warner in Chris-Craft's broadcasting subsidiary.

"That would make Chris-Craft by far the biggest shareholder in Warner. More important, it could stop control of Warner passing to Mr. Murdoch because American law restricts ownership of broadcasting companies by foreigners. Furious at attempts to outmaneuver him, Mr. Murdoch brought in fresh lawyers and retaliated by threatening to take effective control."

Why all of this over a declining company with serious trouble in several of its major holdings, particularly Atari? In a company which lost a very considerable amount of money last year (its stock declined from $59 per share to $22 per share and barely climbed up to $27-3/8 per share at latest report)? A loss of $424.7 million on sales of $2.4 billion in the nine months prior to September of 1983 does place the company in a jeopardy position. Murdoch may be examining the company for assets which he prizes intending to scrap the remainder of the firm (Warner has already terminated 30% of its white collar workers). News Corporation, the Murdoch holding company, previously purchased a 50% stake in Ansett, the Australian airline, only to acquire its share of a large television station. Perhaps a similar fate is now planned for Warner.

The Economist goes on to speculate that, "Mr. Murdoch is stalking Warner for its films, which he needs for his planned expansion from newspaper and magazine publishing to television. Warner's film division includes the Warner Brothers film production company and a library of hundreds of films.

"Warner also has a 50% share in Warner Amex Cable Communications which owns 147 cable television franchises across America.

"Mr. Bruce Batthews, the deputy managing director of News International says that the group is interested in Warner 'because we feel they know a lot about programming. Whether we control them or not, we will probably get closer to the programming side.'"

Advertising Age (January 9, 1984) in a signed article by Stuart Emmrich entitled "Murdoch Really After Warner?" stated, "Rupert Murdoch dramatically intensified his cat-and-mouse pursuit of Warner Communications late last week by indicating that he is now prepared to fight for outright control of the huge communications company.

"In a filing with the Securities & Exchange Commission, Mr. Murdoch withdrew his earlier promise to buy no more than 49% of the company's stock, saying he is now ready to mount a proxy fight for controlling interest in Warner.

"The move was the latest in a series of financial and legal maneuvers that has much of Wall Street watching and guessing about the ultimate intentions of Mr. Murdoch's strategy. Although it now appears that he is serious about trying to take control of Warner, some analysts say that he has several other options still open to him.

"Those include trying to force War-

ner chairman Steven Ross to bargain away some of the company's more attractive subsidiaries—such as its film and TV production companies or its cable TV systems—as a way to keep Mr. Murdoch from pursuing the whole company.

"To blunt that maneuver, Warner retaliated two weeks ago by announcing an agreement with Chris-Craft Industries...Warner also said that it was preparing to increase number of outstanding shares by 20%.

"Mr. Murdoch tried to counterattack Warner's strategy late last week by filing a petition with the Federal Communications Commission challenging the deal between Warner and Chris-Craft.

"In the petition—which asks for the FCC to delay the stock exchange between Warner and Chris-Craft—lawyers for Mr. Murdoch assert that the deal would violate FCC regulations, specifically those which prohibit cross-ownership of TV stations and cable systems in the same service area."

According to **Advertising Age,** Chris-Craft Chairman Herbert Siegel, Warner Chairman Ross and Murdoch met in New York at which time Ross and Siegel endeavored to convince Murdoch to relinquish the takeover attempt and sell the stock which he already holds in Warner. Murdoch's response was the recent SEC filing at which time he stated his intent to escalate the scale of his stock purchase in Warner.

As **Advertising Age** states, "The question is what does Murdoch want or how much does he want. No one knows exactly what he is doing, and in some ways that mystery could be his greatest strength in all of this,' said John Reidy, an analyst at Drexel Burnham Lambert."

And once again one of the two major publishers of comic books is a small pawn in a much larger chess game as DC Comics finds its future dependent on how this major conflict of interests turns out. None of the parties to the conflict are probably even considering the very existence of DC at this time. About two years ago Paul Levitz, DC's Business Manager, explained to me that the great strength of his company was the supreme financial position of the parent corporation and what that power could mean to both his firm and the direct market that they were newly interested in. I told him at the time that I doubted that it was an unmixed blessing.

DC has planned at least seventeen new projects and fifteen summer annuals for 1984, Dick Giordano, Vice President—Executive Editor of DC Comics Inc., announced at Creation Convention in New York on November 25, 1983. "Since I've been at DC," Dick said, "I have worked to make it a publishing house where we sit down and think not about what kind of new

THE BLUE DEVIL

Dick Giordano

super-hero we do, or what kind of successful concept we can come up with, but rather, whether or not the ideas of our writers and artists proposed to me are good ideas and will make for good comics. Only then does my department turn a project over to the Marketing side of the business and ask them to sell it."

Based on that reasoning, "1984 looks to be an even more exciting year than the two years previous, both of which had impressive sales gains that indicated to us that what we were doing was what you had wanted us to do for so long." Smiling, Dick said, "The sleeping giant has awakened."

Firestorm Graphic Novel by Gerry Conway and Pat Broderick, is expected to follow **Warlords** and be DC's third graphic novel. It's called "Corona", and Conway has been given the freedom to expand the motivations of his character in a broader fashion than he might in the regular edition. Scheduled for sale in the spring.

MU-109 is a graphic novel written and drawn by Ernie Colon, whose credits at DC include **Arak, Son Of Thunder** and **Amethyst, Princess Of Gemworld.** Instead of fantasy, this time out Colon works with space opera, covering the perilous journey of the ship MU-109. It's planned for summer.

Samurai Son Of Death will be DC's first graphic novel done by Japanese artist Hiroshi Harata. Written by Sharman de Vono, it features traditional Eastern themes written and drawn in a Western manner.

Blue Devil is created by Gary Cohn and Dan Mishkin and drawn by Paris Cullins. "This book makes comic books fun again. Not juvenile. Fun!" says Dick. "It's about a guy who's a stuntman and a great creator of monster costumes and the like. He invents one for a movie called **The Blue Devil**—and it kinda grows on him." There's a supporting cast which echoes its Hollywood setting. The book debuts on the June schedule, first as a preview in **The Fury Of Firestorm #24** and then later in the month as a number-one issue. It will be in the Mando format and sell for 75 cents in the United States.

New Talent Showcase will be expanded to 48 pages for $1.25. "We've got a backlog of exciting material, and we're planning to get it in the public's eye as fast as we can," said Dick.

Sun Devils will be a maxi-series by Gerry Conway, Dan Jurgens and inker Rick Magyar. This story pits a small band of intrepid rebels against sinister invaders in a space opera setting that allows for theme as well as action. The covers for issues 1, 2 and 3 form one scene; 4, 5 and 6 a second; 7, 8 and 9 a third; and 10, 11 and 12 a fourth. The series is structured in the same manner, so that each "tryptych" of three issues forms a story, and each of the four sets combines to tell another story. The first issue debuts on the July DC schedule.

Super-Powers mini-series features the threats of Luthor, Braniac, the Penguin and the Joker. Can the Justice League of America stop them? And if they can stop them, can they stop their near-omnipowerful and secret manipulator? This series has been plotted by Jack Kirby, who will draw the cosmos-shattering conclusion.

The Jan Strnad and Gil Kane **Sword Of The Atom** mini-series was successful in 1983, but Jan and Gil felt that some loose ends needed tying up and **Atom Special** is the result. It's scheduled for release in spring.

Dan Mishkin, Gary Cohn and Ernie Colon struck paydirt with their **Amethyst, Princess Of Gemworld** maxi-series and it becomes the first maxi-series to graduate to a regular edition. "The funny thing is that **Amethyst** was a series that nobody expected to do well because it wasn't super-heroes and it didn't star men," said Dick. Dick also expects to name the series differently. It will be a 75 cents Mando title [95 cents in Canada].

J'Emm, Son Of Mars is by writer Greg Potter, who chronicles the Martian race which includes J'Onn J'Onzz in a maxi-series in late spring. Mando format, 75 cents in the U.S. Artist to be announced.

Jonni Thunder is a private detective in Los Angeles in 1984, but she's got one thing going for her that most private eyes don't—she can become a human thunderbolt. Written by Roy

Thomas and drawn by Dick Giordano. Format to be determined. Scheduled for summer.

DC Annuals will be in 48 page Mando format ($1.25 cover price in the U.S.) and include **The Teen Titans, The Justice League Of America, DC Comics Presents, Sgt. Rock, All-Star Squadron, Warlord, The Fury Of Firestorm, Batman, Superman, Green Lantern** and **Batman And The Outsiders.** In addition, there will be two annuals in the deluxe format for the first time, costing $2.00 (U.S.) for 48 pages. There are **The Legion Of Super-Heroes** and **The Omega Men.** Also a **Supergirl Movie Special** is planned in the same format as 1983s **Superman III Movie Special.**

Giordano explained that this wasn't the whole of what he had planned for 1984. "I've been spending some time with Brian Bolland and we're on the verge of being able to announce an outstanding project for him for late 1984 or early 1985," said Dick. "There seems to be a half-dozen ideas for Batman Graphic novels proposed to me every day. Roy Thomas is developing a JSA mini-series. Gerry Conway is working on a JLA mini-series. Other mini-series in development include ones devoted to Red Tornado, Hawkman, The Barren Earth and Underworld, the working title for a police story written by Robert Loren Fleming. Len Wein and George Perez have talked to me about a super-hero team book. Gil Kane and Jan Strnad are developing a maxi-series. Jack Kirby will be working on a maxi-series. There are exciting new concepts being discussed for Superman and Wonder Woman. We've given Marv Wolfman and George Perez the go-ahead to do a deluxe format special of some kind. Doug Moench has had a new maxi-series approved. Alex Nino had a series approved. Mike Barr is developing an Elongated Man mini-series. We've got a Mishkin and Cohn Deadman proposal to work on. There's a Captain Carrot mini-series. Keith Giffen is working on a mini-series and is hoping to do additional back-ups such as one he's got coming in G.I. Combat. We're talking about an Arak annual. Bob Rozakis is working up a Superboy mini-series. Len Wein, Marv Wolfman, Peter Sanderson and Nelson Bridwell are still developing the History of the DC Universe. And I haven't been back at my desk since Wednesday.

SUN DEVILS

Dick concluded by saying, "Probably the most exciting thing we're doing in 1984 is our hardcover/softcover line." Dick explained to the fans in attendance that it was DC's desire to reward not the writers and artists of **The New Teen Titans** and **The Legion Of Super-Heroes** but a token of thanks to the audience of those books for supporting them. "We knew how many of you were making these titles hits in the specialty market, and we wanted to make them as special as some projects that followed, like **Camelot 3000.**" Both **The New Teen Titans** and **The Legion Of Super-Heroes** will debut as deluxe books in spring and will not be available through normal distributing channels. Many DC fans will not be able to purchase these books at their normal outlets.

Of course, all of these plans are dependent on the fate of the parent corporation Warner.

JACK KIRBY TO DO NEW GODS SEQUEL, OTHER PROJECTS, FOR DC

Jack Kirby, hailed by many as the King of Comics and creator or co-creator of **Captain America; The Newsboy Legion; The Sandman; The Fantastic Four; The Hulk; The X-Men; The Avengers; Kamandi; The Demon**; and much, much more, wil return to DC to work on a group of projects.

The announcement was made today by Jenette Kahn, President and Publisher of DC Comics Inc., who said, "Jack Kirby is one of the true giants of comics, and especially of the superheroes characters. Jack's work has made him a legend—and deservedly so, and I'm thrilled to have him once again a creative contributor to DC."

According to Paul Levitz, Vice President-Operations of DC Comics Inc., "Jack will rejoin DC as a writer, as an artist, as an editor and as a consultant on the use of the properties he has created. In the short run, that means new work for our series of **New Gods** reprints and a completely new sequel; eventually, we plan both a mini-series featuring the Justice League of America and Darkseid and a maxi-series as well."

When Jack Kirby first returned to DC Comics in 1970, his "Fourth World Trilogy" of **The New Gods, The Forever People** and **Mr. Miracle** became instantaneous hits and set the standard for conflict on a cosmic basis in comics. In 1974 Jack left these titles to pursue his newer creations, **Kamandi,** and the **Demon.** Since then he has worked for Marvel Comics on **2001, Devil Dinosaur** and **Machine Man** and Pacific Comics' **Capt. Victory** and

Dick Giordano and Roz and Jack Kirby. Photo by Albert De Guzman for DC Comics Inc.

Silver Star.

Jack's first project will be to assist in the repackaging of his eleven issues of **The New Gods.** "I will be doing new covers as well as some pin-ups and some new back-up material where needed," he said. Nicola Cuti is serving as associate editor on the six-issue run.

The Hunger Dogs will be Jack's next assignment for DC. He will write, draw and edit this Graphic Novel sequel to **The New Gods.** Again Nicola Cuti will serve as associate editor.

"It's a pleasure to be back at DC after nearly eight years," he said. "I expect to have a lot of fun working on **The New Gods** again, and I'm looking forward to starting as soon as I get back to California." [DC flew Jack and his wife, Roz, to New York to complete negotiations.]

"You've got to stand in awe of Jack's creative energy and sheer brilliance," said Dick Giordano, Vice President-Executive Editor of DC Comics. "It's an honor to have him on our staff."

Jack has also agreed to help plot and drew the climactic fifth issue of a **Justice League Of America** mini-series. Paul Levitz said that DC would announce more details on both of these projects before next spring.

The New Gods deluxe format reprints will begin with issue #1, dated June 1984, shipping February 21, 1984, for an on sale date of March 15, 1984. **The Hunger Dogs** will ship in the fall of 1984. No dates are being announced for the **Justice League Of America** mini-series.

BILL SINKIEWICZ JOINS NEW MUTANTS, BOB MCLEOD BECOMES PART OF SKYWALKER AND COMPANY

Bill Sienkiewicz will be the regular artist on **The New Mutants** beginning with issue #18, Editor Ann Nocenti announced. He will handle both pencilling and inking.

"Bill was already working on a two-issue story when he decided to take on the book as a regular assignment," she said. "With Bill's intense style of storytelling, we'll be exploring new ideas and new directions, with settings ranging from Xavier's mansion to outer space."

In issue #18 Sienkiewicz and writer Chris Claremont introduce a new team member, Warlock [no relation to Adam Warlock]. They also unveil "the definitive **New Mutants** villain," Nocenti said. "He wields planet-shattering capabilities, and he is Warlock's father."

More frequent **X-Men** tie-ins will center on Professor Xavier's feeling of responsibility for the younger team. "Also, a mysterious young woman will show up in #18, and her arrival will radically affect the lives of the X-Men," Nocenti added.

Claremont and Sienkiewicz plan to

do stories which will focus on the unique aspects of each team member's personality, beginning with Dani Moonstar in issue #18.

"Until now, the New Mutants have been wrongly perceived as the second string X-Men," Nocenti said. "With the changes we have planned, the series will have a strong identity of its own. Individuals will be faced with challenges that will forge the group into a team to be reckoned with!"

Bob McLeod, co-creator of **The New Mutants**, has decided to take on a regular series, **Star Wars.**

Beginning with issue #87, McLeod will replace Ron Frenz as penciller on that title, with Tom Palmer remaining as inker, according to Editor Ann Nocenti. Frenz left the book to join the artistic team for **The Amazing Spider-Man.**

McLeod will also pencil issues #83 and #85 before taking over as series artist.

LENNIE HERMAN DIES AT 53

Lennie Herman, one of the chief creators for the new Marvel children's line and an alumnus of Harvey Publications, died January 2 of a heart attack. He was 53 years old.

Herman, along with Warren Kremer and Editor Sid Jacobson, created three of the titles planned for the new Marvel line: **Planet Terry, Top Dog** and **Royal Roy**. Herman was the writer and Kremer the artist.

At Harvey Publications Herman acted as editor and writer from 1972-83, scripting such features as **Richie Rich, Dollar The Dog** and **Jackie Joker.** He had also been a contributor to Marvel's **Crazy** magazine.

As vice president of the Cartoonists Guild, he was prominent in the field of single-panel comic strips. His cartoons appeared in **Colliers, The Saturday Evening Post, Readers**

Lennie Herman Self-Caricature

Digest and others. Herman was also a regular contributing cartoonist to **Floor Covering Weekly**, a trade publication, for 30 years.

Herman suffered his fatal heart attack while playing handball at a Brooklyn, New York, community center. This was his second such attack. The first also occurred on the handball court seven years ago, according to Sid Jacobson.

"Lennie was the funniest person I've ever known and the funniest writer I have ever worked with in comics," Jacobson said. "He made a tremendous impact on everyone he knew. He was everyone's friend."

MARVEL CHILDREN'S LINE TAKES SHAPE

While the Marvel Comics children's line has yet to find a name, a variety of titles are currently being developed.

Planet Terry is a humorous science fiction title drawn by Warren Kremer, who will also do **Top Dog,** the adventures of a talking dog. Bob Bolling is producing **Wally The Wizard,** a medieval fantasy about a sorcerer's apprentice.

Marvel is currently in "serious discussion" with Jim Henson concerning a monthly **Muppets** title and a bi-monthly **Fraggle Rock** title, according to Marvel President Jim Galton. To launch the regular Muppets title, Marvel plans to adapt the upcoming **Muppets Take Manhattan** movie.

"The entire children's line was conceived to fill the void created when Harvey Publications ceased publishing," Galton said. "Marvel has a very real dedication to attracting, developing and entertaining a new generation of comics readers."

MARVEL TO PUBLISH OLSHEVSKY INDEXES

George Olshevsky, famous for his authorized **Marvel Index** series, will package **The Official Index To Marvel Comics,** to be edited by Mark Gruenwald and published as a monthly Marvel publication.

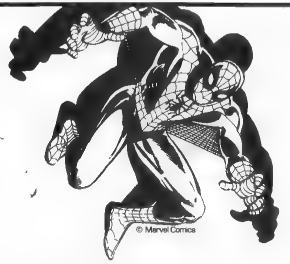
The Index will follow the **Official Handbook Of The Marvel Universe** format as a 32 page, comic-size publication with no advertisements, Gruenwald said. Each issue will feature a new cover by a Marvel artist.

"George approached us years ago about our publishing Marvel Indexes, but we didn't feel the time was quite right," Gruenwald said, "though we did give him full authorization when he decided to produce them himself." With the popularity of the Marvel Universe handbook, it became obvious that the time had come for the index. Previously the indexes were published by first G & T Publications [George Olshevsky and Tony Frutti] and then by Pacific Comics.

The series will begin this spring with **The Amazing Spider-Man**, with an entry for every issue ever published. The first issue will sport a cover by John Byrne.

Each entry will feature a full-color illustration of the cover, complete credits, the publication date, and details on characters appearing in the issue. These will include the previous and following appearances of each prominent character.

"We have plans to index all of the Marvel titles, beginning with the major ones," Gruenwald said. "This



Dollar the Dog for Marvel's Children's Line

series is a natural continuation of George's old indexes, and will make an excellent companion to the **Marvel Universe Handbook**."

MARVEL, ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL LAUNCH COMICS/COMPUTER GAMES SERIES

Marvel Comics and computer software publisher Adventure International have joined forces to produce a series of inter-related comics and computer adventure games featuring major Marvel characters, Editor-In-Chief Jim Shooter announced.

Beginning in May, Adventure International will issue a special "Quest Probe" series of computer games with a continuing story line featuring Marvel characters. The first game, starring the Incredible Hulk and Dr. Strange, will be written by Adventure International owner Scott Adams. There will be twelve games in the series.

Plans call for three games per year, each capable of acting as a self-contained adventure. The one exception will be the final game, which will require information accumulated from earlier adventures. They will be distributed through comics specialty shops as well as normal computer software outlets, and will be compatible with a number of different computer systems.

Adams is well-known for his developments in the area of computer adventure games with a sequential storyline, such as the popular **Adventureland, The Pirate Adventure** and the new **Sorcerer Of Claymorgue Castle**. His games were among the first of this type designed for the home computer system.

With the release of the first game, Marvel will also begin a series of comics designed to act as a springboard for each adventure. Readers can enjoy each issue of the comic, then continue the adventure through the game module, Shooter explained.

John Byrne and Bob Budiansky have plotted the series to fit neatly into the Marvel continuity, so that the reader does not have to buy the game to enjoy the story. Each issue is slated to have a different creative team, and the artist will also design the graphics for the game. The entire series will be released via newsstands and comics specialty shops.

An illustrated plot synopsis will be distributed with each game, so that the player does not have to purchase every issue of the comics series.

"This will be a masterpiece of cross-continuity," Shooter said. "The folks at Adventure International are eager for input from our creators here at Marvel. We will be involved with this project all the way, fitting it carefully into the Marvel Universe."

When he approached Marvel with the concept for "The Quest Probe," Adams was highly optimistic. "I've been a Marvel fan for as long as I've been reading," he said. "When I decided to publish a series of adventure games utilizing a licensed property, Marvel seemed like a natural tie-in."

"These characters not only lend themselves to an adventure environment," he added, "but they've proven—unlike a lot of more transient movie properties—that they have real staying power."

Comics Consumer Guide

MARVEL

Titles shipping March 6, on sale March 27

☐ **The Thing #13**—The Thing faces the darkest side of one of his oldest foes. Written by John Byrne, penciled by Ron Wilson and inked by Joe Sinnott.

☐ **Daredevil #208**—Written by Denny O'Neil, penciled by William Johnson and inked by Danny Bulanadi.

☐ **New Mutants #17**—The superpowered teens must take on the Hellfire adults, plus we find out just **when** did Illyana and Danielle disappear to. Written by Chris Claremont, penciled by Sam Buscema and inked by Tom Mandrake.

☐ **Dazzler #33**—Dazzler takes on the Dallas Cowgirls. Written by Jim Shooter, penciled by Frank Springer and inked by Vince Colletta.

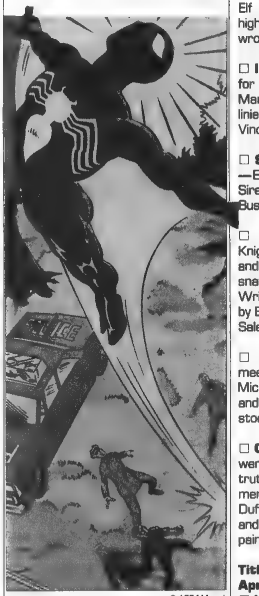
☐ **Conan The King #23**—Why would King Conan protect the killer of his son? Written by Alan Zelenetz, penciled by Mark Silvestri and inked by Geof Isherwood.

☐ **Kitty Pryde And Wolverine (Limited Series) #2**—In far off Japan these two discover the secret of Ariel's father. Written by Chris Claremont and penciled and inked by Al Milgrom.

☐ **Six From Sirius #4**—In the conclusion the telepathic talents of Ambassador are all that stand between her companions. Writer Doug Moench and artist Paul Gulacy. Hudson stock, Direct Sales Only.

Titles shipping March 13, on sale April 3

☐ **Amazing Spider-Man #254**—Who's the villain Spidey's been chesing for the past year? Plus Peter's other battle—with Aunt May. Tom DeFalco wrote and Ron Frenz penciled.



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☐ **Captain America #295**—Cap and Nomad battle Baron Zemo, the Red Skull and Mother Superior and her Sisters of Sin. Written by J.M. DeMatteis, penciled by Paul Neary and inked by Ed Barretto.

☐ **Thor #345**—Thor plays the Dark Elf a game of gin rummy, for the highest stakes of all. Walt Simonson wrote, penciled and inked.

☐ **Indiana Jones #19**—The search for the Arnheim Ring leads Indy and Marion to Cuba. Writer David Michelinie, penciler Herb Trimpe and inker Vince Colletta.

☐ **Savage Sword Of Conan #101**—Even Conan cannot resist "The Siren". Plotted and penciled by John Buscema, script by Michael Fleisher.

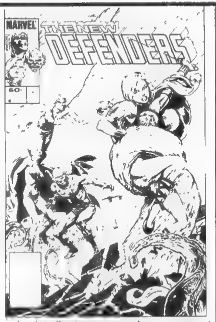
☐ **Moon Knight #38**—Moon Knight goes after the body-snatcher and the body the body-snatcher snatched goes after Moon Knight. Written by Alan Zelenetz and penciled by Bo Hampton. Mando stock, Direct Sales Only.

☐ **Micronauts #48**—The 'Nauts meet a being older than the very Microverse. Writer Peter B. Gillis and penciler Kelly Jones. Mando stock, Direct Sales Only.

☐ **Crystar #8**—Crystar and Moltar were human once plus the hidden truth about the Chaos Wars and the menace of Malachon. Written by Jo Duffy, penciled by Ricardo Villamonte and inked by Dave Simons. Cover painting by Michael Golden.

Titles shipping March 20, on sale April 10

☐ **Incredible Hulk #297**—The Hulk is back with all traces of Bruce Ban-



ner's intellect gone unless a good friend can help. Written by Bill Mantlo, penciled by Sal Buscema and inked by Gerry Talaoc.

☐ **Avengers #245**—The Avengers are pitted against the Dire Wraiths; Quicksilver seeks out Bova; Hawkeye and Mockingbird look for a house. Written by Roger Stern, penciled by Al Milgrom and inked by Joe Sinnott.

☐ **Conan #160**—Conan battles a series of menaces from beyond time. Written by Michael Reisher and penciled and inked by John Buscema.

☐ **Marvel Tales #165**—Reprint "Bring Back My Goblin To Me" from Spider-Man #27. Stan Lee and Steve Ditko.

☐ **X-Men #183**—A turning point in the life of Kitty Pryde. Written by Chris Claremont, penciled by John Romita, Jr. and inked by Dan Green.

☐ **Rom #56**—From the depths of space comes a shock so sinister that not even Rom can stop it. Written by Bill Mantlo, penciled by Sal Buscema and inked by Mel Candido.

☐ **Power Man And Iron Fist #107**—When Luke and the Fist get involved terror follows.

☐ **G.I. Joe #25**—Meet Zartan, the newest Cobra assassin. Written by Larry Hama and penciling and inking by Russ Heath.

☐ **Marvel Age Magazine #16**—Mando stock, Direct Sales Only.

☐ **Marvel Fanfare #15**—The Thing in a solo adventure. Penciled and inked by Barry Windsor-Smith. Hudson paper, Direct Sales Only.

☐ **Epic Illustrated #24**—Cover by Pepe Moreno. Stories written and drawn by John Bolton, Lela Dowling and John Jay Muth.

Titles shipping March 27, on sale April 17

☐ **Fantastic Four #268**—Tragedy strikes the Fantastic Four. John Byrne wrote, penciled and inked.

☐ **Marvel Team-Up #143**—Captain Marvel teams up with Spider-Man and Starfox. Written by David Michelinie, penciled by Greg La Rocque and inked by Mike Esposito.

☐ **Iron Man #184**—Tony Stark continues his fight. Written by Denny O'Neil, penciled by Luke McDonnell and inked by Steve Mitchell.

☐ **Peter Parker, the Spectacular Spider-Man #82**—What possible threat could come between Spidey and the Black Cat? Written and penciled by Al Milgrom and inked by Jim Mooney.

☐ **The New Defenders #133**—Meet Cutlass and Typhoon. Written by Peter B. Gillis, penciled by Alan Kupperberg and inked by Kim DeMulder.

☐ **Star Wars #85**—What can you say about a fighting mad Wookiee? Written by Jo Duffy, penciled by Ron Frenz and inked by Tom Palmer.

☐ **Alpha Flight #12**—One member of Alpha Flight will fight no more plus the conclusion of the origin of Sasquatch. Written, penciled and inked by John Byrne.

☐ **Dreadstar #10**—Vanth's showdown with the mysterious Z—and the resolution of the 200 year-old war. Written, penciled and inked by Jim Starlin. Baxter stock, Direct Sales Only.

☐ **Beauty And The Beast (Limited Series) #3**—Dazzler and the Beast fight each other and Doctor Doom appears. Written by Ann Nocenti, penciled by Don Perlin and inked by Kim DeMulder.

Continued on Page 60

NOTES

TALES OF SUSPENSE AND DELIGHT

By Sam Kujava

Being the Quest, Struggle and Capture of The Elusive Comic Book by one adventurous fan.

It took a herculean effort to propel my clunky Schwinn bicycle beyond a creaking crawl. The metallic monster responded to my furious pedal-pumping as I maneuvered through the quiet streets, avoiding the traffic of Shawano Avenue. The prize was in the pouch behind the bike seat.

A heavy summer downpour came from nowhere. At least I hadn't expected it, nor dressed for it. The cool rain drenched my t-shirt and cords and chilled me to the bone. Or was I thinking of the punishment that awaited at the end of my trek?

Reaching the relative safety of the carport, I carefully unlatched the sturdy cowhide pouch that held my prize and retrieved a rolled-up copy of **Adventure Comics** #357. My favorite new Legion member, Ferro Lad, had died in action only months before. Now, the cover featured the "Ghost of Ferro Lad" who was shown haunting the halls of the 30th Century Clubhouse. The pouch had protected the comic book from all elements, and now the issue that had been staring at me all week from the stand at Schultz Drug Store was mine!

We're all attracted to comic books for different reasons: larger-than-life characters, favorite writers and artists, accessible, affordable entertainment that satisfies youthful needs for fun and adventure. As much as all of that, I remember the circumstances and situations of collecting comics at an early age to be just as exciting and special as any superhero exploit.

When I picked up my first comics at the late age of ten, I didn't know any other kids that read comic books. My

mind couldn't comprehend that these wondrous things were put together by talented people, although I noted whenever I could the signatures at the bottom of the page. I suppose that I should have been dimly aware that hundreds of people were involved in the production and distribution of books that were bought by millions of kids, but, faced with the enormity of it all, I decided that these colorful stories were meant for me alone. The latest adventures of Superman and Batman were akin to listening to the conversation of friends and finding out what they had been up to.

I personalized my comic book reading experience to such a degree that I was extremely sensitive to any attack or degradation of 'my' books. The negative reactions I received from all quarters—parents, brothers, grandparents, friends and teachers—led me to create my own view of things-as-they-were. Insecure, callow youth that I was, security, logic and order were desired above all. Even if it was largely a product of my imagination.

By restructuring reality to my own ends, I could achieve an uneasy truce with my peers and elders, and still be able to escape into my own, one-to-a-customer world. So began my tightrope walk.

The trip through the rain to purchase that copy of **Adventure Comics** was typical of my bad luck with the weather. The resultant parental punishment was partly due to their worrying about my health, as well as displeasure at my obsession with funnybooks. If there was a comic book out there that I wanted, the climate did not matter. The previous winter, I had had my eye on a copy of **Detective Comics** #352. There were a couple of copies left at a Stop-N-Go store a mile down the street. As usual, I did not have twelve cents to my name, but a great Infantino/Anderson cover beckoned. A circular splash set against a bright green background, it showed a closeup of Batman slugging a bad guy, as a small revolver popped into the criminal's hand and barked off a shot that was headed for my hero's cowl! Around the picture, four of those crazy hands typical of the Julius Schwartz/Carmine Infantino collaborations teased the potential buyer with, "Watch out, BATMAN! This villain is tricky!", "Too late, BATMAN! He's got you!", "SEE? We warned you!" and "Now you're REALLY in trouble!". Under the DC Go-Go Checks was the title "Batman's Crime Hunt A-Go-Go!" and to the left of the logo was the further inducement, "Another Double-Page Pin-Up of Batman & Robin!".

All **this** for only 12 cents!!? My mind was clouded in ecstasy. I would get the money for this comic if I had to sell one of my brothers! And **no one**

would stop me from buying this book! No one! Timing was always crucial. If I waited too long, all the copies would be sold before I returned, pennies and dime in clenched fist. And the cold Wisconsin winter was a factor. So far that week the temperatures had been mild, in the twenties and thirties. The streets had been cleared of snow, so I could get my Schwinn out of storage and cut my travel time down to a minimum. I would get my payment on the weekend for doing my household chores.

Sunday was D-for-Detective Day.

It snowed heavily. The temperature dropped, though I dressed for it. There was no possibility of biking through a light blizzard, much less going far from home. Rather than argue the point with my parents, I just up and left. I walked the mile down to the Stop-N-Go store, bought the prize-worth-any-punishment, and trudged back home quietly, the freshly fallen fluff muffling my footfalls.

When I walked in the back door my parents were more astonished than angry. They couldn't understand why I would walk all that distance for a simple comic book, when I knew I was doing 'wrong'. They couldn't sense the desire and strength of purpose that loomed large in a small boy. The punishment was swift and sure...and for the life of me, I can't recall the gruesome details. The wonderful comic that I read over and over, as well as the winter walk and glad purchase, are with me still.

Financial shortcomings have always been a point of frustration with me. I never got an allowance. What I spent was earned. And, half of what I earned had to be deposited in my bank account. Mom and Dad ran a floral shop/greenhouse; the back door of my house led to a hot humid workplace where I did all manner of chores to make spare change. For a long

time they had a soda pop machine installed outside the garage, so that coin-eater also vied for my youthful attention. And then there were the weekend Jaycee-sponsored film matinees every summer; Mom paid for the tickets but the popcorn and pop was our responsibility.

As the oldest son it was my inevitable chore to escort one or more of my ungrateful little brothers to the West Theatre, to make sure they didn't get lost. Boy, was I tempted. After the double feature I would count our collective booty, buying a cheap sugar treat to walk home with. Somehow I always maneged to have just enough change left to pick up at least one comic book. Even if some of that change was actually my brother's share.

I would crouch by the magazine rack, week after week, frantically trying to decide, and never satisfactorily succeeding, in picking one title out of twenty or thirty equally great selections. My little brother would whine and wail...to no avail.

This practice worked rather well for some time. Then little Jayme had to go and get a little older, and a little smarter. He realized that I was greedily coveting his pennies and demanded his share. Changing tactics, I high-pressured him into buying his very own personal comic book(which would eventually work its way into my collection) but this only worked once or twice. Jayme preferred all-day suckers and fudge

popsicles to any kind of reading material.

As Jayme grew even older he must have decided to get back at me for all those shortchanging sojourns. He was your requisite rotten little brother with an angelic face who could get away with murder and **still** find a way to get it blamed on you! And he had a further perverted twist...he didn't get mad, he got even. This was bad enough in itself but Jayme also knew how much I treasured my comics. He went where he could inflict the most lasting damage.

Whenever I made the mistake of needling him just too much, he would get that devilish smile on his angel face and leave the room quietly. Later on that day or week, I would open one of my comics quite innocently and find a neat, careful tear right down one of the interior pages. My anguished howl heard throughout the house meant that the sneaky little brat had done it again! When I began collecting paperback books Jayme graduated to them, although he would only rip the pages of cartoon paperbacks such as my Ballantine EC reprints.

You can only stymie your parents temporarily. I managed to come up with my own spending money and sock some away besides. (They couldn't say I was wasting money.) I continued to trek to the neighborhood library every week and devour several books. (They couldn't claim that I was limiting my reading only to comics.) My school grades weren't suffering. In fact I was, year after year, one of the outstanding students of St. Jude Parochial School. That was another onus that I found difficult living down, and my parents sensed the weakness. Mom and dad would check each and every report card, and if my marks fell, the illicit intrusion of comic books into my life would be deemed the culprit and summarily thrown out.

For many semesters that was a threat that did not bother me in the least. I had to work hard to earn my bevy of "A"s and "B"s, but each report card was top-heavy with high marks and other honors.

So how did I know that puberty would come along and knock me about? As my body developed, so did my emotions churn about on the inside. I was no longer the polite, dutiful child and pride of the Kujava family. The sarcastic, know-it-all adolescent surfaced.

There was this **one** teacher in this **one** class that I just didn't get along with. Nothing I handed in was proper enough to suit her. She didn't like my face or tone of voice and probably saw me as the good boy gone bad.

At the time I was in a neo-teenage fog, oblivious to the changes going on within. In retrospect, it must have been a drastic personality clash with just that **one** teacher. In all my other classes I was doing fine, as usual.

That one "D" on my report card stood out, glaring at me and my parents. No amount of pleading did any good to dissuade my mom and dad, but I didn't let that stop me from trying. Logic failed. Making some kind of tradeoff didn't even come close. Moping and pouting felt good but didn't make them think twice.

The comic books had to go. The most my mom would say was that in the event my marks improved...I **might one day** be able to buy a comic book again. But we would have to talk about it...when the next quarterly marks were issued. Those three

months were the longest of my life.

I felt used, betrayed, imprisoned. It just wasn't fair, I weakly reasoned, as my Mom and my helpful, rotten little brothers carted my collection off to the big garbage can out in the greenhouse.

Following them out back, I stared bleakly at the pile of comics at the bottom of the can. Under no circumstances was I to take any of those books out, warned my mother. Fine, I thought, but they can't stop me from staying and watchin' them!

If I retrieved all of my comics from the trash, that would be noticed by my mom, or for sure, by my brothers, who were delighting in my fall from grace. With heavy heart I realized that the majority of the titles would have to remain right where they were. I deliberated for what seemed like hours and smuggled a special select few back into the house and up the stairs, one at a time, under my shirt. It was difficult to decide where to hide them. My bedroom was out. Mom would be cleaning and find them, or else my brother Jayme, who shared the room, would certainly uncover them and gleefully present them to whichever parent was closest at hand.

We had a spare room where our baby toys and other things were stored. I found an old stamp album, a gift from a neighbor, that I had filled with dinosaur stamps long ago and discarded. My brothers never looked at it. I had almost forgotten its existence. This was the perfect hiding place for my survivors.

My life became a careful covert operation. If I took out a comic to read in the relative privacy of my bedroom, it had to be smuggled underneath my shirt, always. And **only** when my brothers were playing outside. I couldn't take the chance of one of them bursting in the room while I was lost in Metropolis or Gotham City for a few brief moments.

For all my caution, each comic would be found, somehow. They were thrown out for a second and final time. Miraculously, my dogeared copy of **Justice League of America**#47 evaded detection. I passed this last beloved comic from hiding place to hiding place, even after the stamp album had been found out. I read it over and over, dozens of times, relishing the weighty script of Gardner Fox and the character-crowded art of Mike Sekowsky and Sid Greene. This was the second half of a JLA/JSA team-up, so I got to see twice as many heroes. To me, I had achieved some kind of small victory. It was a kind of omen that things would get better in the future.

Grades improved as soon as that teacher left the school. Even my stubborn mom had to admit that the change was startling...and gratifying. Try as she might, she couldn't think of any good reason not to let me begin buying comics again.

I was thirteen and allowed to work full-time at the greenhouse so as to earn my tuition for the coming freshman year at Premontre High School. At 50 cents an hour, my bank account was looking better than ever, and I had real long green in my pocket for the first time. The summer of 1967 was golden and glorious **Superboy**, **Adventure**, **Action**, **Fantastic Four**, **Amazing Spider-Man**, **Marvel Tales**, **Eighty-Page Giants**, **Superman**, **Batman**, **Aquaman**, **Teen Titans**, **The Brave and The Bold**, **Showcase**, **THUNDER Agents**, **Mighty Crusaders**, **Marvel Collector's Item Classics** and many other titles were purchased and enjoyed "to the max"! The highlight of one shopping trip that I shared with my mom was the time I picked up eight new Marvel comics from the spinner rack, plunked down a buck of my money and received four

cents in change! Mom just looked on in amazement, certain that she had unleashed a monster.

I was just making up for lost time.

A traumatic phase of my life had passed. My collection grew, more or less out in the open. One day, my brother Tommy told me of a kid in his class that collected comics just like me! The kid was interested in trading and was going to call me that weekend.

My feelings were mixed. I didn't feel so alone anymore, knowing that there was someone out there, perhaps as crazy and obsessed as I was. On the other hand, there was no guarantee that things would ever be the same again. I would have to open up my private world of comics and admit another traveler.

The phone rang. A new and different adventure was beginning.

MARVEL SUPERHEROES SECRET WARS

The writer, editors and artist discuss the biggest event in Marvel History

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OVER 56 CHARACTERS WILL TAKE PART IN THIS MASSIVE COSMIC EPIC, AND WHEN IT IS OVER THERE WILL BE DRAMATIC CHANGES IN THE MARVEL UNIVERSE

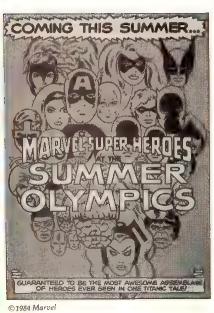
By Hal Schuster

Marvel Super Heroes: The Secret Wars is perhaps the longest and most important story that Marvel Comics has ever published. The tale is cosmic in scope and involves virtually every major character in the Marvel Universe. To learn the story behind the story **Comics Feature** talked to the writer, Jim Shooter, the editors, Tom DeFalco and Michael Hobson, and the artist, Mike Zeck. One obvious clue to the importance of the maxi-series is the simple truth that the writer is the Editor-In-Chief of the company, the editors are respectively the Executive Editor and the Vice President for Publishing and the artist is one of the publishing firm's hottest new luminaries just off a popular stint on **Captain America.**

Over 56 heroes and villains are involved in the magnum opus including virtually all of the Avengers, most of the X-Men, three of the four Fantastic Four, Spider-Man and numerous others. By the end of the series they will all be changed in major ways, some will be injured, and one will even be killed. Teams will have members replaced and long-standing characters of over twenty years duration will be altered in irrevocable ways. All due to the interference of a cosmic entity so powerful that he had never noticed our omniverse before. The Beyonder, who serves as catalyst for the war, comes from beyond our omniverse entirely. According to author Jim Shooter, "to a character of the type of scope he is, we are like bacteria."

How did the book come about? That seemed the most logical place to begin. Shooter explained, "The idea was started in 1981. It's one of the things we do here at Marvel. We've always had a consistent universe where characters meet each other and so forth. It's not so much a revolutionary idea as the logical extension of it. Sooner or later there was going to have to be an event that more or less involved, if not all the major characters, a large number of major characters, together. That's what we do at Marvel. Characters are always meeting each other, they all live in Manhattan and are running in to each other. Crossovers, continuity, that kind of thing. This is just sort of the ultimate story in that regard. A story large enough to encompass a large number of characters, not only heroes but antagonists; there are over 56 characters involved.

"Due to a combination of things [the event is occuring now after 20 years of waiting]. About a year and a half ago I walked into Mike Hobson's office and proposed we do a limited series like this one with continuity and things like that and he thought it was a great idea. We had done something like it once called the **Contest Of Champions.**"



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(Left) Spider-Man vs. Hulk at the Winter Olympics. (Right) The promotional piece for the Summer Olympics which became The Contest Of Champions when the U.S. did not attend the summer Olympics

The **Contest Of Champions**, a three issue mini-series, sold very well when it was finally published after revision and changes. Originally it was planned to be published in treasury size as the **Marvel Superhero Olympics** but was cancelled since that was the year that the United States had pulled out of the Olympics. It was intended to be a sequel to the previously issued **Marvel Superhero Winter Olympics.**

According to Shooter, when the **Contest Of Champions** was released it was "very popular, very successful. I thought it was OK but it was a faltering step towards something that really could be a big deal. **Contest Of Champions** is fine, the people who worked on it are good and so forth, but it didn't really have the scope it should have had. It wasn't integrated to the Marvel line of comics, it was an aside. My idea was to do something that really was the fulfillment of something Stan (Lee) set out to do all those years ago, something that was deeply ingrained in the continuity, that you had to read because it was something significant that involved all of the characters. My idea was to do it in a big way if we were going to do it, that was the whole purpose of building up to it across the line for three months and having the characters become involved in their own titles that led into the limited series and coming out of that series effected, changed by the experience. At first we had suspicion. John Byrne, Roger Stern, everybody said, 'You're going to do **what** to **who**? You're going to do what to my character?' That kind of thing. After a while they became interested in it and they kept calling me to make suggestions. John Byrne kept calling me every couple of days with suggestions for something for me to do in my series that would help him to set up something in his. Same thing with Chris (Claremont), he kept coming up with little serindipitous ways where what I was doing actually helped him with the stuff he had going on in **The New Mutants** and **The X-Men** and so forth. I found that I was co-plotting the books with almost everybody. I was getting help from the best. They were all contributing.

"For instance, Chris had wanted to do an adventure—he had been building up for an adventure in **The X-Men** and **The New Mutants**—a crossover, I think—where the X-Men weren't available and it was the New Mutants and Kitty. And Kitty was in trouble in **The New Mutants** with no one to carry the ball except them, there was no one to fall back on. If I hadn't popped up with my new series, Chris would have had to engineer a way for the X-Men not to be there when they were needed. It just fell together like a charm.

"With **The Fantastic Four**, John has been doing an awful lot of character development with the Thing and this, as it turned out, played into his hands because he wanted to remove the Thing from the Fantastic Four and this gave him the tool. In my series the Fantastic Four leave with the Thing and come back with the She-Hulk. This is something John wanted to do, that was John's idea.

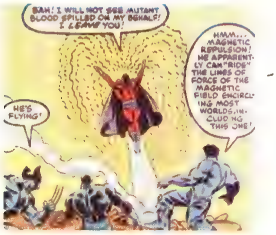
"What I'm finding is that all of the stuff they are feeding me is working happy little accidents. I guess that things the writers have asked me to do or accomplish work with the way I see the storyline evolving."

But how did Shooter approach the project? How does anyone begin to create a story involving so large a cast and changing so many tenets of a fictional universe while still remaining internally consistent with the myriad other books involved?

"I've no delusions of grandeur. I believe in editors. Tom DeFalco edits the scripts I write and for the purposes of this job works with Mike Hobson, the publisher, to make sure...you won't see my name listed as Editor-In-Chief of these because Tom and Mike provide the editing and that's because I wanted it that way. Tom is not shy about pointing out mistakes or problems or checking things with people and coming back and saying, 'Look, this guy wouldn't do this' and every so often we'll discuss it and sometimes I'll change it and sometimes I won't."

Tom DeFalco explains it this way, "I really don't know at what stage I got involved. This project, was Jim Shooter's brainchild. We get a lot of letters from kids asking 'Why don't you have all of your heroes fight all your villains?' It always sounded like a good idea, but how could we do it? For a couple of years now Shooter has been trying to figure out a way to do that, the ultimate battle. I spoke to him a number of times about it. Next thing I knew things got out of hand and we decided to do it. Here at

Marvel, a lot of times we start working on projects which are things we always wanted to see. We start working on them on our own, in our spare time, and we never dream that


SAM! I WILL NOT SEE MUTANT BLOOD SPILLED ON MY SIGNAL! I LEAVE YOU!
HMM... MAGNETIC REPULSION. HE APPARENTLY CAN "RIDE" THE LINES OF FORCE OF THE MAGNETIC FIELD ENCIRCLING MOST WORLDS, INCLUDING THIS ONE!
HE'S FLYING!

The front cover of Issue #1 of the Contest Of Champions. The series sold well but really was an aside to the Marvel Universe, not an integral part of it.

they will come to fruition or will ever see print. The more we work on them the more people around us become excited. Finally, you get caught up on a wave of enthusiasm and they get published.

"It doesn't matter (that Jim Shooter is in effect my boss) because Jim Shooter has been a professional writer since he was 13 years old. Once you establish a professional frame of mind, even if you're in charge of something, if he becomes the editor for that project then he is in charge of you and you take his advice and you go along with his instincts as much as your own. I don't even know if I can express it in the proper words but once you're a professional, you're a professional through and through and it would never occur to Jim Shooter to pull rank on his editor."

In approaching the project, Shooter says that he "made a chart for myself to keep track of where the high points are in each issue and what essential major things are going to happen and when, and then with each issue I sit down and look at my little chart and sort of know what is supposed to be accomplished and fill in the detail and stuff like that..."

DeFalco explains, "I think Jim is one of the best writers in the business. He has such a great sense of vision on anything he works on. I have a great advantage over him, however, because when I get one of his plots I can play Monday Morning Quarterback. He's just sat down for 20 hours and sweated out the plot and written the best possible sequence that he could come up with and it's usually pretty damn good. But I can always say, 'Well, yeah, this is a great scene as it is, but we can make it even better by just making this tiny bit of a change here and this little bit of a change here!' "

Tom DeFalco went on to indicate, "I tend to be of the traditional school. In the course of a story there should be a lot of fun and the characters should have really spectacular events happen to them. Jim is of the same kind of school. So it's difficult to see my influence in this story.

"To begin the project, we pulled in every writing team that was involved and we discussed how what they were doing would fit in with what we were trying to accomplish. So we called in Writing Team A and we set up with them and Writing Team B, then Writing Team B had a glitch so we had to get back to Writing Team A and change something there.

"What glitches arose? I try to block that out of my mind. That's a terrible subject. I can't think of any examples. One of the coordination things was the Spider-Man books which at the time I wasn't associated with. Spider-Man appears in three different monthly books by three different writers and had to disappear from all three books in the same way. That was a real pain in the neck, trying to get him to disappear in three books and have it all work out. Three different conflicts, three different artists, how to get it the same... We also had to coordinate the Fantastic Four. John Byrne went through heroic efforts to make sure that everything worked out because he had an initial problem in both **The Thing** and **Fantastic Four** to have the characters disappear twice.

BOUNDING FROM TREE TO TREE WITH INCREDIBLE GRACE AND AGILITY, THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN MOVES EVER DEEPER INTO THE PARK...
UNLESS MY SENSES ARE DECEIVING ME, MY QUARRY SHOULD BE JUST ACROSS THIS CLUMP OF TREES!
AND THEN, ONE FRANTIC MOMENT LATER...
O-H!GOSH!
THIS CAN'T BE REAL!

Co-ordinating the three Spider-Man books proved to be a major headache. Spidey had to disappear exactly the same way in all three books, despite the fact they are drawn by three different artists. The coordination this caused between the three different teams was tremendous.

"Like I say, I'm trying to block it all out now. Everybody was on the phone and running back and forth and pitching in and going along with it because this was a real exciting project. If any one of our people had been against it, or had not wanted it to work, this thing would have failed miserably. But everybody got so excited about it because it was a game. It was a toy. It was something we could all work together on. All the major heroes fighting all the major villains! Everybody, especially Roger Stern, went to great lengths to make sure that this whole thing worked.

"This is a major event in the Marvel Universe. Major heroes disappear for a week. This alone was a major point to build a plot on," DeFalco concluded.

Shooter explained how the Marvel Universe works in terms of the book. "What we have here is something really wonderful. We've got a consistent universe and what that means to me is that no part of it is unimportant or irrelevant. I've always encouraged everybody to try not to do unimportant stuff because I don't want to do it if it's not important. When Chris [Claremont] was writing **Marvel Team Up**, he wanted to guest-star the Wasp. At the time I was writing the Avengers and I helped him plot a story that involved major changes for the Wasp, changes in her powers, changes in her situation and so forth. That's how I feel it ought to be done. I think that if it's done right, the way it has been done recently in all three Spider-Man books, the way it's done in the FF family, that's just kind of the ideal situation. Read the **Fantastic Four** without reading **The Thing** if you can't afford it and you can get by but if you do read both of them, it is a richer experience, the sum is greater. Reading **The Thing** makes the **Fantastic Four** greater. If it works you can read them independently or together and that's just what we are looking for.

"[In plotting the Secret Wars] I found out the upcoming continuities in each of the characters' individual books, whether I liked it or not. I don't know whether I needed to in every case. I ended up finding out because I was working with all these guys, getting all their input, I became involved with what they were doing. There was no way to avoid it and it was good that it happened. This is really integral to all the continuities."

When coordinating with so many independent thinkers it seemed possible that major disagreements would occur over the personality and actions of the characters between Shooter and the character's normal scripter. On this matter DeFalco had one comment, "When that sort of thing happens what we tend to do is we put the two writers into the room, we give them switch blades and whoever walks out . . .".

Shooter was a little more helpful.

"No. Not [illegible] flexible guy. I tend to work in cooperation with these guys pretty well. I tend to respect their territory. I pretty much gave them carte blanche. I said, 'You tell me what you see we can do, what we can accomplish or whatever and I'll find a way to make it work.' As I said, I didn't have to work too hard to make it work because the cooperation was enthusiastic on their part so they all pitched in and ended up helping me, ended up doing my work for me and giving me a lot of input for the series. It was a bunch of guys pitching in. I think if I had real hard-core ideas like Spider-Man going out of his head or something I might have had some flack but I didn't have

Continued on Page 31

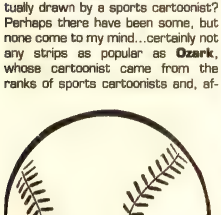
STRIP SEARCH

MAX ALLAN COLLINS

Ray Gotto's **Ozark Ike**, a whimsical adventure strip about a naive hillbilly baseball star, first appeared in late 1945 and lasted till 1959 [though Gotto himself left the strip in the mid-'50s]. It was one of the most successful continuity strips of the post-war era, building to over 250 papers by the time of Gotto's exit; and would have to be considered second only to **Joe Palooka** as the most successful sport strip of any era.

In fact, it is the only strip with a baseball player as its hero [in this writer's memory, anyway] to make any mark on the world of comics...which is well worth noting, considering the game was the unchellenged "national pastime", until professional football came into its own in recent years. But then Ozark Ike was a pro football player, too, in the off season, and there haven't been any popular strips centering around football players, either... again, except for Ozark.

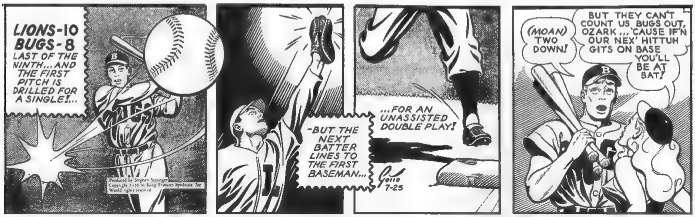
And what other sports strip was actually drawn by a sports cartoonist? Perhaps there have been some, but none come to my mind...certainly not any strips as popular as **Ozark**, whose cartoonist came from the ranks of sports cartoonists and, after leaving the strip, went on to a distinguished career as a cartoonist for **The Sporting News**.



Copyright 1952 The Sporting News

But comic art historians have - thus far, anyway-had little to say about Ray Gotto and his work. Coulton Waugh, in **The Comics,** merely comments that the strip "is in the **Li'l Abner** tradition, though with original variations," and doesn't consider the strip important enough to merit reprinting a selected panel. [In fairness to Waugh, it must be noted that **The Comics** appeared in 1947, when **Ozark Ike** was still a young strip.] Jerry Robinson, in his book [also called **The Comics**, but appearing in 1974] points out that **Ozark Ike** "enjoyed a period of popularity in the '40s and '50s," and leaves it at that, while elsewhere in the same volume being rather overly generous to any number of minor comic artists. Ron Goulart admits the strip was a "meticulously rendered feature," and the entry on **Ozark** in Maurice Horn's **The World Encyclopedia of Comics** is kind, but condescending [and inaccurate: Ozark is described as "something of a hick, and almost certainly a bad baseball player" - he was, of course, his team's star player]. Other historians have ignored Gotto and **Ozark** entirely.

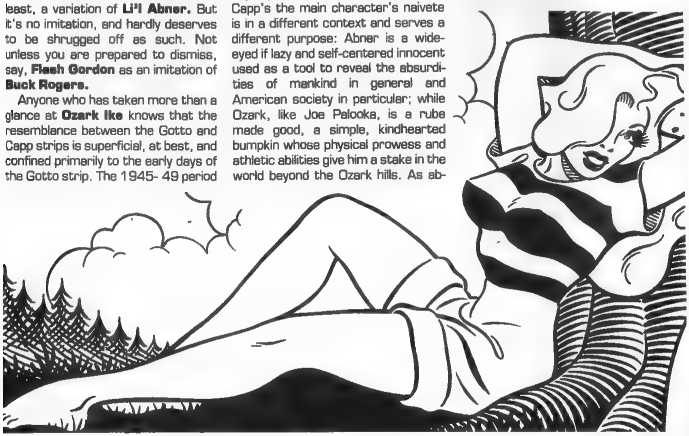
If they won't say it, I will: Ray Gotto in **Ozark Ike** is a master story teller, whose sense of design and ability to compose daily and Sunday strips can lead the reader's eye exactly where


LIONS-10
BUGS-8
LAST OF THE NINTH...AND THE FIRST PITCH IS DRILLED FOR A SINGLE!...
-BUT THE NEXT BATTER LINES TO THE FIRST BASEMAN...
...FOR AN UNASSISTED DOUBLE PLAY!
GOTTO 7-25
(MOAN) TWO DOWN!
BUT THEY CAN'T COUNT US BUGS OUT, OZARK...'CAUSE IFN OUR NEX' HITTUH GITS ON BASE YOU'LL BE AT BAT!

the artist wants it to go, a unique stylist whose influences are as disparate as Al Capp and Alex Raymond, but whose vision ultimately is his own.

Perhaps the Waugh comment is the key to understanding the neglect of interest in and comment on Gotto's work. **Ozark Ike** is, in a sense at least, a variation of **Li'l Abner.** But it's no imitation, and hardly deserves to be shrugged off as such. Not unless you are prepared to dismiss, say, **Flash Gordon** as an imitation of **Buck Rogers.**

Anyone who has taken more than a glance at **Ozark Ike** knows that the resemblance between the Gotto and Capp strips is superficial, at best, and confined primarily to the early days of the Gotto strip. The 1945- 49 period alternates, with decreasing frequency, hillbilly sequences with the more dominant sports sequences. True, Ozark and Abner have both been called "dumb," and probably rightly so, but in Ozark's case "naive" is the far better word...and since Gotto's world is a more realistic one [or anyway more conventional] than Capp's the main character's naivete is in a different context and serves a different purpose: Abner is a wide-eyed if lazy and self-centered innocent used as a tool to reveal the absurdities of mankind in general and American society in particular; while Ozark, like Joe Palooka, is a rube made good, a simple, kindhearted bumpkin whose physical prowess and athletic abilities give him a stake in the world beyond the Ozark hills. As absurd as Dogpatch is, the "real" world is always shown by Capp to be far worse. Gotto, on the other hand, prefers the real world, and allows Ozark only an occasional pit stop at his Dogpatch [Wildweed Run]. Satire is seldom Gotto's goal; he does not, however, aim lower than Capp - simply at a different target.



Only with Dinah, Ozark's beautiful girl friend, can Gotto be legitimately accused of directly lifting anything from Capp. Dinah is, of course, Daisy Mae's counterpart; they even lounge around in similar abbreviated costumes beneath similar phallic trees. Not that Dinah and Daisy are identical: Daisy's polka dot top and ragged accidental mini-skirt are replaced with Dinah's striped-top and rolled-way-up jeans; and Dinah wears her hair long and flowing to the shoulders, with Veronica Lake peek-a-boo bang, at which point Daisy was still wearing her hair in a Viking Maid braid (it wasn't till Daisy's honeymoon in 1952 that **her** hair finally came down.)

A more important difference is the Ozark/Dinah relationship, which is the direct opposite of Abner/Daisy. Whereas Abner literally ran for years in a desperate attempt to escape marriage and Daisy Mae, Ozark loves Dinah, and wants to marry her (proving that here, at least, he's not as dumb as Abner.) Ozark kisses and holds Dinah in his arms at every available opportunity; his baseball career takes periodic slumps only when his lovelife with Dinah seems in some way threatened. Dinah feels the same about Ozark, and they **want** to be married: Just as Abner narrowly escaping marrying Daisy Mae on Sadie Hawkin's Day became the central recurring situation in the Capp strip, a running gag if you will, so did the continual stumbling blocks presented to Ozark and Dinah, constantly preventing their marriage, become a running gag in the Gotto strip.

Early on, it was the Hatfields/McCoys type feud of the respective families of Ozark and Dinah that kept the pair apart; later it would be lack of money, and at the end of each season Ozark would somehow lose (oftentimes would be swindled out of) the money he'd made leading his team to a World Series victory. This need for funds was also a convenient storytelling device to make it necessary for Ozark to play at other professional sports besides baseball. As soon as the World Series ended, Ozark would hustle over to play pro football, after which a quick season of basketball would follow.

By as early as 1949, the hillbilly sequences were all but disappearing from the daily strip. A yearly event (the hillbilly football game which settled, for a year at a time, the feud between Ozark and Dinah's families) was a slapstick affair that eventually became out of character for the strip, which had soon begun to treat its sports rather seriously. The football game was between the McBatts and the Fatfields, and the McBatts (Ozark's family) were all pipe-smoking white-haired bearded men, whereas the Fatfields (Dinah's family) were short and fat and smoked cigars; both the pipes and cigars were smoked throughout the game. For several years the "Football Brawl" was the strip's Sadie Hawkins Day, but Gotto tired of it and while the Fatfields made occasional appearences, this aspect of the strip was all but laid to rest.

Gotto may have abandoned the hillbilly sequences because of the Abner resemblance, a resemblance which certainly had helped sell the strip in the first place but which any talented and sincere creator would try to discard as soon as possible. Still, it's more likely he shed Wildweed Run because he simply preferred to concentrate on big league sports. It was a loss for fans of the strip, however, because some of the most beautiful Gotto artwork appeared in those hillbilly sequences, where elaborate pen and brush techniques were employed to give a woodcut effect that captured a backwoods flavor Capp never attempted. And while Gotto's use of lines for shadowing, and various crosshatching and feathering effects, were as detailed and intricate as anything the comics had seen, the work remained crisp and reprinted perfectly in newspapers, every line, every effect crystal clear. Gotto's ability to draw with reproduction in mind was flawless; even his most complex work was reprinted without a trace of muddiness.

The baseball and other professional sports sequences were done in a clean, more modern style, the woodcut effect replaced with screens of Ben Day dots. Part of this had to do with the action of the playing field: Gotto didn't want excessive detail cluttering up the scene, getting in the way of the fast ball speeding from a pitcher, or that same ball getting clouted out of the park by Ozark or teammate Zip Zelen or Bubbuh Bean. A favorite Gotto effect was placing a huge baseball in a foreground of a panel, so that the ball seemed to be coming right at the reader, right out of the panel.

But off the field, in a scene in a hotel room or at a train station, Gotto would often return to his more complex and detailed style. A door would never be just a door: it would be a door with a hundred woodgrain whorls; a porter at a train station will never just be carrying a suitcase: he'll be carrying an alligator suitcase, with a pattern as intricate as a road map. One effect common to both backwoods and baseball scenes is the semi-silhouette, with highlights of white (and sometimes the strips on Dinah's top and the rims of her boots) giving added form to silhouetted figures.

The incredible amount of detail Gotto made use of is even more amazing

considering his style had some of its basis in the "bigfoot" comic art of the '20s and '30s. But even at its most cartoony, **Ozark Ike** had the most beautiful and realistically rendered women on many a comic page; realistically rendered that is, in the same sense of "realism" as the Petty and Vargas girls: fantasy brought to life. Gotto women never seem to have need of (or perhaps even heard of) the custom of wearing a bra; but the artist can hardly be accused of being a "breast man" exclusively: the whole female anatomy gets a close, loving look in **Ozark Ike,** and many a composition revolves around a shapely leg or pointing breast that leads right toward the next frame...though some readers may choose to linger over a particularly fetching pin-up pose of Dinah or perhaps one of the sophisticated femme fatales who periodically went after Ozark.

But just as the strip wasn't about hillbillies, it wasn't really about sex, either. What it **was** about was sports, and Gotto could spin a sports yarn like nobody in comics, with the possible exception of Ham Fisher. Like Fisher, Gotto's cast is a vivid one, with Ozark and Dinah at its center, and a host of others around them: Zip Zalen, the rookie shortstop who made good, despite his 145 lb. weight; Spike Kleats, a vicious rival of Ozark's who eventually reforms; Mr. Moran, the team owner, money-mad, sometimes ruthless, but not a villain; Bubbuh Bean, a lanky hillbilly who works his way up through the minors to join his friend Ozark on the big league Bugs; Elmer Hornblo, a "bonus baby" who doesn't make the grade first time around, then reappears a few years later, having worked his way back up, but unlike Spike Kleats, has not reformed a whit; and Rosco Tubbins another hillbilly powerhouse hitter, who is a cocky version of Ozark, but who does not have the stomach for major league ball, after getting a taste of bigtime pitching. Most of the characters are colorful and at least somewhat unpredictable, though manager Skip Skelley is a stock character, a Pat Ryan type with firm jaw and values to match; but in the midst of a team that includes the likes of Ozark Ike and Bubbuh Bean (who were capable of bumping into one another while running the bases), a team that could at times seem more like a circus (which is the way Skelley himself put it) a ray of normality is probably necessery, so the stock manager figure serves his purpose here.

OZARK IKE'S
UNDERDOGS
A BOY, A DOG, GOTTO
WHAT KINDA FIGURE IS YUH GONNA MAKE WITH DEM MEASUREMENTS?
I DUNNO, MAYBE A COUPLA BIG RED ROSES
AHHHH
BUT AH CAN'T SEE WHUTCHA REACTION TA A FOG-HORNED MAN WOULD BE...
AIN'T AH DONE YUH A FAVOR? WHERE'D YUH GET DEM TICKETS?
AH TH' OLYMPIC GAMES! HERE'S MY TICKET TA RUN IN DA 100 METER RACE!
ALMOST FORGOT!
AHH'VE A FRIEND AT FENDER'S!
CAN'T SEE NOTHIN' IN THAT CROWD 'CEPT A BUNCH OF BUSTIES...
SURE, SURE...
JOIN YOUR AUNTIE TURKEY TROTTERS...
AH! THAT'S WHAT MEDICINEMAN TH' TRIBE IS CALLED!
SHUCKS! I'M GETTIN' TA BE A REGULAR BUSTIE!
LOOK AT DAT ONE IN FRONT!
SHE'S GOT A FIGURE LIKE A HOURGLASS!
LOOK AT DAT ONE IN BACK!
SHE'S GOT A FIGURE LIKE A HOURGLASS!
GOTTO

Not all of the characters were successful. Ozark Ike's parents (perhaps because they stood in the short but overwhelming shadows of Mammy and Pappy Yokum) never really take shape, and they disappear in 1950 (ironically making their final appearance in a story in which Ozark is sent a false telegram telling him to rush home because his Pop is dying).

Like Skip Skelley, the male manager and female owner of the Wildcats pro football team remain stock figures, and actually the football sequences as a whole (while lending themselves to exciting visuals) are the least im-

ALL THEM GIFTS YUH GOT HAVE DONE BEEN CARTED OFF'N TH' FIELD, OZARK!
THEY SHO GAVE ME TH' BIZNESS, AWRIGHT... AN' NOT LIKE AH EXPECTED!...
„HOPE AH KIN REPAY TH' FANS BY BANGIN' A BATCH UP HOME RUNS T'DAY!
DON'T RECKON HE'LL GIT MUCH USE OUT UF TH' TUBA, SKIS, TUXEDO OR SOME UF THEM OTHUH PRESENTS, BUT SOON AS THIS GAME IS OVUH HE KIN STEP INTO THAT BIG, NEW AUTYMOBILE AN'—
OOPS!...
„NO DRIVUH'S LICENSE!!"
GOTTO 7-14

AS ALL AMERICA SEARCHES FOR OZARK IKE...
ROOKIE SPIKE KLEATS: "WITH HIM OUT OF TH' WAY, I CAN SHOW THIS CREW WHO TH' REAL STAR IS ON THIS CLUB!"
CLUB OWNER T.P. MORAN: "TH' KID'S WORTH A COOL MILLION TO TH' BUGGY HAS HE BEEN KIDNAPPED?"
OZARK'S ONE AND ONLY, DINAH: "IS HE COMIN' BACK T' TH' OZARKS... AN' ME?"
MANAGER SKIP SKELLEY: "HAS HE JUMPED TO TH' MEXICAN LEAGUE?"
BAT BOY BUGZY: "WHY WOULD OZARK LEAVE WITHOUT TELLIN' HIS BES' PAL...UNLESS HE MET UP FACE T' FACE WITH FOUL PLAY?"

pressive in all of **Ozark Ike.** This is primarily because no other characters emerge in these sequences, outside of Dinah and Ozark themselves; there are no colorful teammates at all, where the Bug abounded with them.

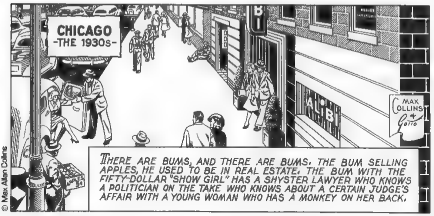
The basketball sequences, however, in many ways outpoint the baseball ones. The hillbilly and professional sports worlds would converge in these stories, and believably too, as Ozark, and Bubbah Bean and a hayseed crew [collectively known as the Hot Shots] score so well on the barnyard circuit they are eventually pitted against pro teams. Here Gotto's humor and love for sports meet head on and the result is a happy blend of laughs and action.

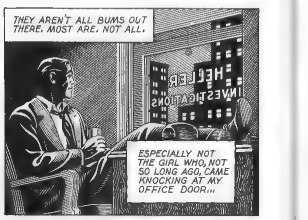
Though humor is secondary to Gotto, it's constantly around in **Ozark Ike,** even if it's just Ozark being occasionally bopped on the noggin by a ball, while daydreaming out in the left field about Dinah. There is a surprising lack of non-sports adventure in the strip, very little of the sort of off-stage melodrama Ham Fisher and his successors dealt in. The games themselves provide the excitement, with some sub-plot concerning some relatively minor problem of Ozark's adding interest and suspense. Fear of black cats by Ozark was a particularly unsuccessful sub-plot [and, typically, was part of a football sequence], while the various [and usually imagined] problems in Dinah and Ozark's lovelife provided many of the better ones. Attempts by gangsters to fix games occur, but there is never any bloodshed, nor really any threat of it. Typical Gotto whimsy is the sequence in which Dinah becomes the model for a cartoonist [Art Gumm] who does a comic strip called "Dinah's Diary." Dinah neglects to tell Ozark exactly why she can't go along with him on the out-of-town games this year, and he suffers a bad batting slump, accordingly...until he finally sees the "Dinah's Diary" strip and perks up. "Dinah!" Ozark says, to teammate Zip Zalen. "In a comical strip, uf all places! An' with her evuh-lovin' arms wrapped around' the stoopidest lookin' hillbilly ah've seen..." and Ozark gives the reader a huge wink "...since ah shaved this mawnin'!"

The play, however, was the thing...the play on the baseball diamond, that is. Here Gotto's skill at bringing the reader back for more the next day came into full swing [if you'll excuse a baseball pun]. A runner sliding into home base would fill a final panel on Saturday, while narrator Gotto would slyly say, "Come on, ump...don't make us wait all weekend!" And then on Monday the call would finally come, and with Gotto it could go either way...SAFE!, or OUT! The suspense was real. Gotto, like all umpires, was unpredictable. Truthfully, it was more often the desired call, but you never knew, and Ozark and the Bugs did not always win the World Series, let alone every game.

Ray Gotto worked on **Ozark Ike** for less than a decade. After he left his creation, the strip sputtered out. It was taken over by ghost Bill Lignante, who had in fact been doing the finished Sunday art since 1949 [Gotto wrote the Sunday and did a rough layout - these were separate continuities, often with a hillbilly slant]; after Gotto, the strip was usually bylined as by "Ed Strops," Strops being sports spelled backwards. Gotto meanwhile came up with another baseball strip, **Cotton Woods.** Not having seen much at all of this second Gotto strip, I cannot comment, except to say lightning did not strike twice: **Cotton Woods** struck out. But Gotto did not - he went on to his **Sporting News** days, with many a full page Gotto cartoon appearing in the pages of the famous newspaper. His famous Uncle Sam "Play Ball" cartoon ran on the front cover of **The Sporting News** at the start of baseball season many times.

And wherever he was, Ozark Ike


CHICAGO
-THE 1930s-
MAX ALLAN COLLINS
THERE ARE BUMS, AND THERE ARE BUMS. THE BUM SELLING APPLES, HE USED TO BE IN REAL ESTATE. THE BUM WITH THE FIFTY-DOLLAR "SHOW GIRL" HAS A SHYSTER LAWYER WHO KNOWS A POLITICIAN ON THE TAKE WHO KNOWS ABOUT A CERTAIN JUDGE'S AFFAIR WITH A YOUNG WOMAN WHO HAS A MONKEY ON HER BACK.
© Max Allan Collins


THEY AREN'T ALL BUMS OUT THERE. MOST ARE. NOT ALL.
HEELER INVESTIGATIONS
ESPECIALLY NOT THE GIRL WHO, NOT SO LONG AGO, CAME KNOCKING AT MY OFFICE DOOR...

must've felt proud.

The rest of this column is a personal postscript.

As an original art collector, and fan of the **Ozark Ike** strip (which I'd encountered in various reprint comic books), I was frustrated by the lack of Gotto originals on the market; in years of collecting, I never saw one. Through the National Cartoonists Society, however, I was able to contact Gotto directly, and in response to a fan letter from me, he sent a beautiful original daily (across the room from me and framed on the wall even as I type this). Several other collectors of original art envied my Gotto original, and inquired about getting one for themselves - so, for a brief while I became a sort of agent for Ray, and the small supply of originals he still had left was soon depleted as discriminating comic art buyers added a Gotto to their collections.

My contact with Ray had been very pleasant, and led to an earlier incarnation of the (revised/expanded) article you've just read (published under the title "Gotto and Ozark" in Jim Ivey's small-circulation fanzine **Cartoonews**, in 1975).

About the same time Rick Marschall - the author of Gotto's entry in **The World Encyclopedia of Comics**, oddly enough - contacted me about creating a story strip for Field Enterprises, where he was then editor. We'd become friends through our mutual interest in comics and original comic-art collection; when Rick moved to the midwest (Lake Geneva, Illinois) for the Field post in Chicago, we began getting together to trade art and talk comics. On one of these occasions, he mentioned he'd been hoping to do a new story strip, something adventure-oriented, possibly set in the '30s or '40s; with a private eye or a reporter or soldier of fortune as the lead. I went home and put together a presentation, including two weeks of script, called **Heaven and Heller.**

I'd never written comics before; it had never even occurred to me to do so. I saw myself as a novelist, and I saw comics as a hobby. But Rick - who had read several of my mysteries - had nudged me, and so - **Heaven and Heller.**

The strip was set in Chicago in the early '30s, where my detective - Nathan Heller - would encounter a young psychic amnesiac who called herself "Heaven." The notion was to do tough detective tales in the Hammett/Chandler tradition, well-researched period stories, often involving historical figures; man/woman romance in the classic Caniff vein was another priority [a Dragon Lady-type, Madam DeSombre, formed a triangle with Heaven and Heller]. The first story dealt with the final seance in which Mrs. Houdini attempted to contact her late magician husband.

Rick was enthusiastic about the strip, and gave me the official green light; we began to talk artists. Among those we contacted were Warren Tufts and Alex Toth. Both of those terrific artists seemed inclined toward writing their own stories, so we made lists and argued the merits of dozens of other artists. Finally it dawned on both of us: Ray Gotto.

If we wanted to do a traditional strip, with a period flavor, who better to turn to then a classic cartoonist like Gotto? Still a relatively young man, Gotto would be perfect for the job, we figured...

I called Ray, who was then living in Binghamton, N.Y., doing advertising and other art for the Singer Comany; he liked the sound of the strip, and agreed to do samples purely on "spec." Rick and I sent Ray tons of research material (books on movies of the '30s, old catalogues, magazines, etc.) and I spoke to Ray on the phone about the project almost daily for a period of several months. Rick met with him several times in NYC.

Ray did the first two weeks of the strip (twelve dailies with a Sunday

page in between] as well as "character cards" and other presentation pieces. The work was beautiful; the Sunday page is being printed here for the first time.

I should say, for the first time UNFORTUNATELY - because Rick, who had "bought" the strip, left Field Enterprises - and that syndicate abandoned this and various other of his projects. For a time Rick acted as an agent, and showed the Gotto version around; and later another version, drawn by Fred DeSilva [currently the **Rex Morgan** artist] was shown. But the strip had been rather directly tailored for the needs of a given editor - Rick himself - and a specific syndicate - Field. And Field wasn't buying, now; and none of the other Syndicates looked kindly upon a tough '30s detective strip [which dared to use "damn" and "hell" in the dialogue]; besides, the onslaught of spin-off strips was upon us, as well.

I faded back to novels, thinking this brief, rewarding but frustrating excursion into comics was a fluke. But word of **Heaven and Heller** filtered to the Tribune Company Syndicate, who then called upon me to do **Dick Tracy** samples...

Ironically enough, **Heller** finally did sell - but as a novel; after years of research and work, **True Detective** —the first Nathan Heller story— was published by St. Martin's [in December, 1983]. ("Heaven" is not in the book; she may turn up in a sequel.)

The **Heaven and Heller** experience is a bittersweet memory, now - but still a dream come true, seeing my script brought to life by one of my favorite "oldtime" [forgive me, Ray] cartoonists. As a collaborator, Gotto was so giving, flexible and creative, he damn near spoiled me. We could've done a hell of a story strip for you, folks. Too bad the syndicates aren't into that.

Nevertheless, I owe whatever success I've had thus far in comics to **Heaven and Heller.** Rick Marschall encouraged me to get into the pool, and Ray Gotto taught me how to swim.

Thank you, gentlemen.

Heaven AND HELLER
WHAT... MR. HELLER... WHAT HAPPENED?
AFTER YOU WALKED IN AND FAINTED, YOU MEAN? NOT MUCH.
THIS MUG CAME IN WAVING A .45 AND I HAD TO TAKE IT AWAY FROM HIM, IS ALL.
OH! IT'S THAT HORRIBLE MAN WITH THE DERBY... HE'S BEEN FOLLOWING ME...
HE'S GOT GOOD TASTE, ANYWAY.
BUT WHAT REASON DOES HE HAVE FOR COMING IN HERE WAVING A CANNON?
YOU...YOU BETTER ASK HIM...
WANT TO TELL ME WHO HIRED YOU TO COME BUSTING IN MY OFFICE WITH A ROD?
MAX [BLUNK] GOTTO
...OR WOULD YOU RATHER EAT THE DERBY FIRST?
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Continued from page 22

that. My ideas were more exploring the essence of the characters, developing the character and that we agree on anyway. We all work independently but you wouldn't know it. We talk about that stuff here and so we all have to be fundamentally in agreement about the characters and we are. Peter Parker is a person; we know him. It would be pretty hard for one writer to have a starkly different idea of what kind of guy he is. Another character, Sherlock Holmes, you ask 30 different people who read a Holmes book what kind of character he is and you might get a slightly different emphasis but they're all going to be talking about the same guy and that's pretty much the case here. So that being the case there was no problem."

At times in the past different writers have treated the same character in different fashions both at Marvel and at DC. Perhaps the most recent and obvious example was Marv Wolfman's handling of Superman in recent issues of **Action Comics.** While the stories read very well, many critics have been very puzzled as to the changes in Superman's personality. Superman is a character who for over 40 years has demonstrated that he possesses a stronger mind than a normal man, that he can think faster and reason clearer. He is not omnipotent but he is smart. Wolfman has portrayed him as a hot-tempered individual prone to flashes of anger and easily the pawn of Vandal Savage, the immortal villain. A superhero with this type of personality would certainly make for an interesting protagonist but it simply does not mesh with previous tales of the legendary Superman.

Shooter feels that, "When you find examples (the case in point had been Spider-Man) of that it could be one of several things. It could be that they or we were trying to affect a change and it was done so clumsily that it looked like a mistake instead of a change or that they really didn't understand, it was a bad construction and something had to be corrected. In the 25 years there have been Spider-Man stories, there have been stories that were wrong. It has happened; it can happen. One of the reasons for doing this is to get us together more. The more we work together like this, the more consistent we become with the characters as they appear in various places, the better for all of us. I think in a way this series is going to get more consistency. When Mr. Fantastic appears in the Defenders he's going to be more accurate because the guys on that book have had to grapple with the same problems, work with me on characters and for better or worse I'm the arbiter of that stuff around here.

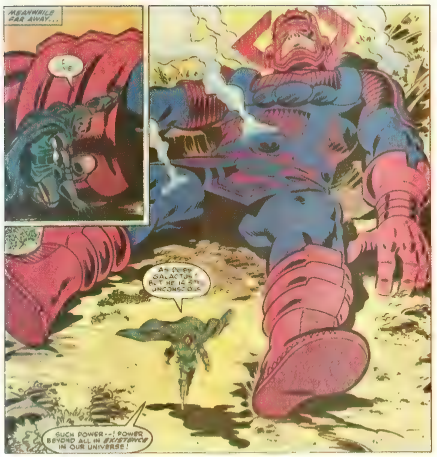
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THERE IS ONE RIGHT THING!
THE MAGES ANSWER? MAGNE SURE QUALIFIES!
HOW IS A WAR IS NOT WORTHY BY THE BEYONDER TO BE AMONG YOU?

(Above) Magneto's presence causes dissension between The Avengers and The X-Men. (Below) Galactus and Doctor Doom are swatted like flies by the Beyonder.

"In a way that's the mantle I've inherited from Stan Lee. I'm the one who ultimately gets to say what the character will do in a given situation. Basically, I talk to the editors and the editors talk to the writers but guys who are doing the mags are doing them because we think that they can do them the best.

"For instance, if somebody does Dr. Strange as a hip, wise-cracking, street-wise kind of guy, that's not what he does, that's wrong. If somebody, as Roger Stern did, really focuses more on all of the mystic aspects and gets much more involved in the implications of sorcererhood and another guy is more interested in the human aspect, the romance with Clea kind of thing, neither of them is wrong. They are both looking at different parts of the same character and if it becomes a situation like wanting to make him a street-wise, wise-cracking guy, then we sit down and settle it. Either we say, 'OK, he's got a good idea, let it roll' or we say 'No, we think you should write the way...'.

"In a way it's a two edged sword. Not only is it my job to have the final say on that stuff but it's also my job to know it. It's my job to make awful damn sure to know who Reed Richards is and to portray him accurately.



Presumebly, if I'm any good with this job, I won't have any problem with how I do Richards. To date I've been good enough so that John [Byrne] hasn't had any problems. As part of the process of creating this we have done the most massive coordination effort we've ever attempted. We sent copies of all of the plots to everybody, copies of all the scripts to everybody, everybody's had their chance to fire back. So far I've gotten some helpful suggestions, I've gotten some pointers on dialect and stuff like that which is fine because there's no one human being who's ever going to have the complete....

"I had a very interesting conversation with Chris [Claremont] the other day when I was explaining the plot and I told him what happened to the X-Men in the next couple of issues and he said, 'What? Wait a minute!!' and I said, 'Wait a minute, let me explain.' Yes it did appear, as he thought, not to be right, but it was a set up for something else. That's exactly what I'm doing, trying to get people to say, 'Hey, what's going on here?' and they see later, 'Oh, that's what's going on' and he said, 'Well, it worked.' He was all ready to rise up to the bait... 'Wait a minute, they wouldn't do that' and I said, 'Oh, yes they would and here's why' and he agreed. As a matter of fact he thought it was pretty good.

"The trouble with talking with Chris is that every time you have one of those conversations he sits there and comes up with 37 other ideas not good for my book, good for his own book. You can't talk to the man without him coming up with more stuff, more ramifications this is going to have on **The X-Men** and **The New Mutants** and the next four-issue limited series we're going to do and he takes that into account, as if he has the next five years of the books already pre-plotted."

Shooter understands the job of a writer and of an editor and enjoys working with the creative, if sometimes difficult, personalities which surround him at the nation's largest comic book company. But he is most excited by the characters themselves, as if they actually come alive for him.

"There will emerge, as in real life, different characters at different times, who will take a lead or a more important role. There is not 'this is the Thor issue and this is the Spider-Man issue'. It doesn't work like that.

"It's pretty organic and natural. It's like a football game where one play one man scores and the next play someone else scores.

"It's on a world that's sort of custom made for them. Actually if I give you the plot in one sentence you'll say, 'Big deal, I've seen that before'. This is not an earthshaking, wonderful, original idea where all these characters get together. That's been done before. The idea here is to do it in a way that fulfills the promise of that situation which I don't think was ever done before. A lot of times, such as with the **Contest Of Champions,** a lot of characters were gathered together in one place, and then they had a story that was interesting and intriguing mainly because there were so many good characters in it, but when you boil down the plot it wasn't all that meaningful.

"There'll be travel and moving around and so forth on this planet that they are placed on. There will be discoveries of different aspects of it and so forth and frankly in the process of this war the place gets a little chewed up because we are dealing with levels of power here which are not your normal levels.

"They all have their effect on each other. This being Marvel, it's kind of easy and convenient to say, 'Well, these guys are the mean guys and these guys are the heroes', but this **is** Marvel and there really aren't heroes and villains. There are these guys over here who tend to be more interested in selfish gains than these guys over there who generally speaking tend to be a bit more on the altruistic side but the crossover is rapid and fierce. No one is quite sure who will make that

As a result of The Secret Wars The Thing stays in outer space. Spider-Man discards his old costume for one which is practically alive and The Hulk has to take it easy with a broken leg.

switch. That is one of the things I'm exploring. Good guys and bad guys, it's all relative.

"These characters are brought together by a force and the immediate presumption is it's us against them, but then we find that us isn't all that together and it all becomes faction against faction. Dr. Doom ends up, sort of by charisma and coercion, becoming in charge or the leader of a number of those that most people would call the villains. Their suspicion is that he has a lot more planned here than just the superficial leading them to victory and the question in their minds is whether he is going to get rid of them before or after. Nobody tells Galactus what to do, he's a faction by himself. The X-Men and the Avengers end up not getting along too well. There's this Rogue person that seems to be among them and the Avengers don't seem to be too happy about her. Not only that but the X-Men are fairly ready to believe that Magneto is a good guy and the Avengers don't buy that for a minute. Why should they? They've had a lot of run-ins with him. Right away you've got a lot of divisions there. Thor and the Enchantress find they have more in common than they thought; they're the only Asgardians in the place. A lot of situations evolve where people are not behaving like their stereotypic roles, they're not the white hats and the black hats, they're people. Thor sees things as only Thor will see them and it's not the way Mr. Fantastic will see them.

"One of the big problems is that at

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one point they decide that they've got a real problem, they need a leader. They run down the possibilities and one of the choices is the Wasp who is the leader of the Avengers. She finds that that and a dime will buy her a cup of coffee. The other people don't know her, don't respect her and won't listen to her. Eventually Captain America becomes the leader and the Wasp ends up deferring to him, not because she's not capable but because she realizes he's the one guy everybody's going to listen to. She faces reality. This is no time to stand on ceremony, they're in big trouble. I'm hoping that the characters behaving as characters is what is interesting rather than some dime-store conflict where all these powerful characters get together and fight. That is the least. It is much more important to me that Reed Richards is a very compassionate man and Wolverine is not. That's fun for me.

"You get to see some of the worst sides of some of the heroes. I think that this is sort of the ultimate cauldron in which these people are tested. Not as heroes and villains but as people. People eat lunch pretty much the same, some a little sloppier, maybe. But that's not where you find the differences in humans. If you have four people sitting there eating lunch, they're acting pretty much the same way. Now if they all look down and see a $100 bill lying on the floor, it's in a crowded restaurant, all of a sudden you're going to find out the differences between those people. You're going to find out that one wants to pick it up and keep it and one wants to immediately call the waiter and another one wants to divide it up. That's when you find out what kind of people they are. So similarly, you put these people in a stress situation, in this case life or death, pretty much the ultimate stress situation. Now you find out what kind of people they are. That to me is what I like to do, that's how all my stories are, that's what I like. I think that's what Marvel has always done. I know that in all of the years I've talked to Stan [Lee] he's convinced me that that's what he liked, that's what he always did, that's what he wanted to do. I feel like I am carrying on the banner of a tradition here. I don't know, I hope so and so far so good. Everybody seems to be as happy as clams."

Just as Shooter indicates, shifting perceptions of a character have been a Marvel tradition and very few individuals in the Marvel Universe have always proved to be totally good or totally evil. Many have crossed the barrier between being protagonist and antagonist. Even Doctor Doom, perhaps the oldest and best of the Marvel villains, has had his good side portrayed and has even acted as the protagonist in his own series. Primeval Marvel comic books, those published in the '40s under the Timely banner, presented the Sub-Mariner as both hero and villain to the point where he both acted as the hero of a comic book and constantly waged a war with the Human Torch [the Golden Age Torch who was a flaming android and not our more familiar Johny Storm of the Fantastic Four]. The first line-up of the Avengers in-

COMICS
FEATURE
POSTER #1

WA-HOO! WE MADE IT! WE'RE BACK ON EARTH!!
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D EVER BE SO GLAD TO BREATHE NEW YORK AIR AGAIN!
OH MY GOODNESS! I CAN'T BE... BUT IT IS! SHE-HULK!! AND SHE'S WEARING A MODIFIED FF UNIFORM!
WHAT IN THE WORLD...?!
DO YOU WANT TO SEE HOW SHE-HULK GOT HER NEW POWERS? HOW SHE-HULK MET THE SILVER SURFER? HOW SHE-HULK FOUGHT THE INCREDIBLE HULK? SHE-HULK #22 ON SALE NEXT MONTH! — BOB

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...provide the brute strength of the FF now that Ben Grimm is wandering through

cluded the Hulk while the second line-up consisted almost entirely of such ex-villains as the Scarlet Witch, Quicksilver and Hawkeye. Various other characters have undergone this transition as well.

While many of the most colorful Marvel characters participate in the Secret Wars at least an equal number do not. Such popular groups as The New Mutants and Alpha Flight are not represented at all while only three of the Fantastic Four show up and one of the X-Men does not. Daredevil, Dazzler, Moon Knight and Rom are all able to headline their own books but are not present for the festivities. Just how did Jim Shooter decide who would wage the battle and why only Americans?

Shooter indicated, "What I did was sort of run down the list of characters until I felt I had involved the people who would be involved and I had involved the logical ones. The decision was made strictly on the logical and creative basis. I just figured that the Avengers, the X-Men, the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man and the Hulk—where they were in the situations they were—were really logical participants.

"It will be explained in the story later that there is a reason why people chose or were chosen and why they got involved. It's kind of apparent in the set-up but it will become more apparent as the series progresses.

"One of the explanations is that this gale took place in Manhattan which is where you mostly run into that type of person...and why there? I think that's probably because of the high density of population there and not only civilian population but super-powered character population. It will be explained more but it was very carefully chosen by the Beyonder. He made a determination based on information he acquired checking things out, which is why there were those surges of energy the characters kept detecting in the various comics. Let's face it, if you're seeking heroic characters, the names you are going to come up with most often are the Avengers and the Fantastic Four, more so than Alpha Flight, more so than the Soviet Super Soldiers, who are relatively secret. It will make sense when all is revealed."

But why the Earth at all? Why not some other planet or even solar system, perhaps one with a star-spanning empire which would certainly be more noticeable.

Shooter questions whether he should give his reasons, "That's stuff that will come out later in the series. I don't know if I should get into that too much. I guess to a character of the type of scope he [the Beyonder] is we are like bacteria, like 'Oh, look at this interesting culture of bacteria.' And the Earth, as has been repeatedly stated in the Marvel Universe, is really the most interesting place. I always liked that about Marvel. In DC comics people from Earth were like the wimps of the universe. Everybody from different planets had better powers and better space ships and people from Earth were really kind of the ordinary kind of guy. But in the Marvel Universe, basically Earth is it.

I--I DON'T THINK I CAN! BACK ON EARTH I HAVE A WIFE WHO'S EXPECTING...AND IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT I MAY NEVER SEE HER AGAIN! OR THE BABY...
I DON'T THINK YOU WANT A LEADER WHOSE THOUGHTS ARE A BILLION PARSECS AWAY, PERHAPS DOCTOR BANNER...
THE HULK? WELL--NO OFFENSE, DOC BUT... IT WASN'T SO LONG AGO THAT YOU WERE A DUMB MONSTER AND IT'S TOUGH TO SHAKE THAT MENTAL IMAGE.
I'D HAVE GUESSED AS MUCH! BAH! I'M NOT INTERESTED IN GIVING ORDERS, ANYWAY! LET WINGHEAD DO IT! HE LIKES IT!
I'M THE LEADER OF THE AVENGERS... BUT...I'LL DEFER TO CAPTAIN AMERICA!
WHY, WASP?
BECAUSE WE'RE OFF IN A STRANGE LAND, UP TO OUR EARS IN A LITTLE SECRET WAR THAT MAY DECIDE THE FATE OF THE UNIVERSE! SOME PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ME WELL. THEY MIGHT HAVE DOUBTS. AND THERE'S NO ROOM FOR THAT!

Earthlings have this incredible potential and even though we're still kind of in the early stages of development, the potential for Earthlings to achieve power, greatness or whatever, has been established again and again. It's just incredible. The Kree Empire, what do they worry about? They worry about this one crummy little back-water planet where the people have potential. It's like the whole universe revolves around us, which is kind of neat from a story point of view and I play off of that."

Since this is a project of the scope that it is and the potential for sales is so great we questioned Shooter as to why the art was being done by Mike Zeck and John Beatty, two competent individuals but hardly the box office draw that a John Byrne or a Walt Simonson would prove. His response was perhaps indicative of the way that the man runs the company. "I don't know. I don't like to make decisions based on market appeal. I like to worry about whether or not it's good. The market will take care of itself. We've never gone wrong doing that. If you use market appeal logic, John Byrne would be drawing everything or some guy would be drawing everything.

"I looked around and I think Mike Zeck and John Beatty were doing just incredible stuff on **Captain America** and not really getting the recognition that John Byrne gets. They were really good people who would do a really good job and I recruited them.

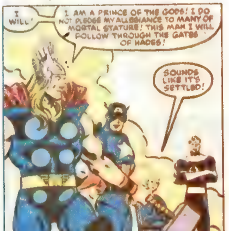
"The thing is that if you just look up

WHAT ABOUT YOUR PROFESSOR? YOU READ MINDS! THAT COULD COME IN HANDY!
I AM ALSO GOOD AT READING HEARTS--NO MAN IN EXISTENCE EQUALS YOUR COURAGE, CAPTAIN AMERICA!
WAIT A MINUTE! HE'S THE LEAST OF US! WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING! I WON'T FOLLOW --A--!

John Byrne—'Oh, it's a big deal, I'll have to go to John Byrne'—in a way that kind of thinking would have prevented the world from having discovered Walt Simonson, that kind of thinking would have kept the world from discovering Frank Miller.

"In that way, by sort of worrying about it being good instead of worrying about who's hot, we've created more hot people and that's great. I think that Mike Zeck and John Beatty, their work has been fantastic of late and I'd have to say I hope that other people like it. I'm just incredibly pleased with the way the stuff has been coming out in the first several issues. If they don't get the recognition from this I don't know what to do, I think it's fantastic."

Of course Frank Miller's star began to shine on **Daredevil**, a book that couldn't even support a monthly


I WILL!
I AM A PRINCE OF THE GODS! I DO NOT PLEDGE MY ALLEGIANCE TO MANY OF MORTAL STATURE! THIS MAN I WILL FOLLOW THROUGH THE GATES OF HADES!
SOUNDS LIKE IT'S SETTLED!

The villains pull themselves together and launch a major assault on the heroes, who have as many problems from within as the villains are providing from the outside. ©1984 Marvel

publication schedule due to poor sales and Walt Simonson was handed **Thor**, a dismal and very weak title in sales. Zeck and Beatty have indeed served their time in the field and they are going to have their career receive a much deserved boost with the amount of attention which this series is sure to receive.

In some strange way this series appears to be a successor to the very popular **Marvel Universe** book which concludes publication in the same month that **Secret Wars** saw its first issue. While the former did not contain a story but merely descriptions of all of the various characters, races, locations and weapons that make up the Marvel Universe and the latter most definitely does contain a story, there are similarities. Much of the popularity of the **Marvel Universe** series was due to the presence of all of the myriad characters and of course this book shares that feature. Further, the **Marvel Universe** presented the definitive specifications for every hero and villain as to what they were capable of and what backgrounds they had. The new series presents Jim Shooter's definitive statement as to how the characters would react to stimuli. The first presented the physical details, the second the mental attributes and personalities and both are quite authoritative.

Now it is the turn of the comic book fans and buyers everywhere to determine how well the book succeeds at its stated goal. The people involved are very enthusiastic and are already planning beyond the twelve issue limited series.

"I don't want to blow my own horn but I'm certainly giving it my all and I don't think that there's been much done like this before. I'm hoping it will be interesting to everybody.

"There's a sequel. Tom [DeFalco] might do it if I can talk him into it as this is killing me," Shooter projects.

DeFalco puts it another way. "Well, we'll see. Let's see how this series does first."

LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

By Ron Goulart

THE QUALITY GANG (PART III)

POLICE
COMICS
10¢
OCTOBER No.23
HEY, PLASTIC MAN! DO YOU THINK HE WAS KILLED BY THE GHOST TRAIN?
THAT'S THE QUESTION IN MY MIND SPIRIT!

© 1994 DC Comics

The last two of Quality's initial bunch of monthly titles, **Police Comics** and **Military Comics,** showed up side by side in the summer of 1941. Among the livelier of what was now a line of seven magazines, they also introduced two characters who've managed to survive, with occasional lapses, for over forty years. One of them was given star billing from the start, the other had to fight his way from a humble six page beginning to the top banana spot.

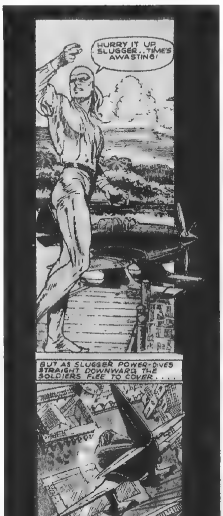
The designated star of **Police** #1 [August, 1941] was "the mysterious figure who fights for justice as the Firebrand." He got the cover of the issue and an eleven page

adventure right up at the front of the book. In civilian life the Firebrand was Rod Reilly, another one of those millionaire playboys who turned to crimefighting because of boredom with his ritz life. His costume consists of scarlet tights, bandana and mask, plus a shirt that seems to be made of cellophane. When he's wearing this "flaming garb," he looks more like a Gypsy violinist in a chichi restaurant than a practicing superhero. Matter of fact, the Firebrand has no super powers at all and brings only audacity, blind courage and some acrobatic skills to the job.

Perhaps being a millionaire, and having the daughter of a fellow millionaire for his sweetheart, made the Firebrand a bit conservative. He tended to specialize in rooting out subversives and revolutionaries. In one early escapade he smashes a revolt in a Caribbean country called Libertad. When his prospective father in law hears of the troubles down in Libertad, he complains, "Holy blazes, Rod...I have millions involved in Libertad sugar!" Rod replies, "Bah! Your losses will be trivial compared with the people losing their liberty!" His fiancee, more practical minded, remarks, "Oh dear! I suppose this will ruin our plan for the cruise on your yacht, Rod!"

What saved this Wall Street dogooder from being a complete dud was the artwork on the early adventures. The **Firebrand** artist for the first nine issues was the formidable Reed Crandall. A gifted man and a master of anatomy, Crandall gave the rather stodgy stories a bit more excitement and life than they actually deserved. I must add, though, that for me Crandall's work was always on the cold side. He lacked the flamboyance and audacity of the top men who gave the real fire to the comic books of the early 1940s. And unfortunately for him and his bandana-wearing hero, one of those true comic book artists was sharing the pages of **Police Comics.**

FIREBRAND



Before we turn our attention to Jack Cole, however, let's consider the rest of the competition in those early issues. In keeping with the magazine's title, most of the other characters had something to do with law and order. Fred Guardineer contributed **The Mouthpiece,** about "newly elected District Attorney, young Bill Perkins," who wears a black mask along with his business suit and fedora when he wants to go after "evasive figures beyond the law." [We've already mentioned, in a previous chapter, how fond the folks at Quality were of the simple costume chosen by the Mouthpiece — Midnight and The Spirit also did business similarly clad.] **711** by George E. Brenner dealt with Dan Dyce, who "serves a life sentence for a crime he never committed." Like the Count of Monte Cristo, Dyce finds a way out of prison via a tunnel. Once outside he decks himself out in a purple costume and fights crime. For some reason that is never made crystal clear, Dyce keeps going back inside prison between cases. Maybe it's because the Big House is rent free. Myself, once out, I'd have stayed out. As we'll see later, 711 eventually did one thing that distinguished him from almost all the other comic book heroes of the day.

Unlike many comic books of the time, **Police** made room for a woman character. "The society columns record the activities of Sandra Knight, debutante daughter of Senator Henry Knight...No one suspects that frivolous Sandra is also the Phantom Lady, whose battles against spies and public enemies constantly make the headlines." As drawn in her early days by Arthur Pedy, the Phantom Lady was slim and far from zoftig. Not much like the streamlined lady crimefighter Matt Baker designed for her reappearance in Fox comics a few years later.

The magazine offered two heroes with extraordinary powers. One was the Human Bomb, drawn by Paul Gustavson. "Roy Lincoln, son of a master chemist, Professor Lincoln, saw his father killed by foreign agents when they tried to obtain his super-explosive 27-QRX...To save the cap-

LATE ONE AFTERNOON AT THE CITY POLICE HEADQUARTERS:
HELLO! ANYBODY HOME??
GULP!
A-RIGHT PLASTIC MAN WHAT DO YOU WANT?
JUST THIS: IF I BREAK UP THE DOPE RACKET THAT'S OVER RUNNING THE CITY WILL YOU TAKE ME ON THE FORCE??
IMPOSSIBLE!! WE'VE BEEN TRYING FOR YEARS AND CAN'T CORNER THEM! THEY'RE TOO SLICK!
BUT TELL YOU WHAT I'LL DO. IF YOU CAN ROUND UP THIS MOB PLUS THAT SKUNK EEL O'BRIAN, YOU'RE ON THE FORCE!
SO I HAVE TO TUCKY MYSELF IN, EH??
CAPTAIN YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF A NEW RECRUIT!
LATER, EEL O'BRIAN VISITS HIS OLD FRIEND IN JAIL...
SURE WE CAN, USE YOU, EEL! GOT JUST THE SPOT FOR A GUY WITH GUTS!
SPILL! IT PAYS! I'M ALL EARS!
ATTA STUFF!

© 1994 DC Comics

sule of the mixture, Roy swallowed it...becoming a charged human, whose bare-handed touch means **Destruction**! He is **The Human Bomb!"** To control his explosive nature, Roy whips up a costume of a material that dampers his power. It includes gloves and helmet and looks something like a white diving suit. The Bomb's fiancee was a pretty blonde named Jean and you can't help speculating about what sort of romantic life they must've had.

Plastic Man began his career, modestly, in the middle of the first issue of **Police.** A creation of Jack Cole, the redsuited rubber man had just six pages in which to introduce himself, go through the obligatory origin routine and establish himself with the reader. He did a pretty good job of it and by issue #5 he was also getting the covers of the magazine. By #9 Plas had ousted Firebrand from the leadoff spot and had nine pages to work in. Less than six months after that poor Firebrand had departed the magazine entirely and Cole's flexible hero had thirteen pages. Cole, who'd originally wanted to do gag cartoons, never developed a completely serious style. When doing adventure stuff he still conveyed a feeling of fun and he exagerated both the figures and the action. Cole also had a good sense of what the fast-growing new comic book business was all about. Like his former colleague, Charles Biro, he knew how to package his work and how to communicate directly. Out of the eleven features in that first issue his is the only one with its own blurb. Right there on the splash panel Cole proclaims, "From time to time the comic world welcomes a new sensation! Such is Plastic Man!! The most fantastic man alive! Vermin of the underworld shudder at the mention of his name! And yet he was once one of them!! Now, read of how this incredible character came to be!"

Cole had a fondness for making heroes out of reformed crooks and here it's Eel O'Brian, "the toughest gangster afoot...wanted by the police in eight states," who goes streight and becomes Plastic Man. Within a year or so Cole grew tired of the duel identity device and Plas was just Plas from then on. When he wasn't being a chair, a snake, an umbrella stand, a beautiful actress, a lap dog or a throw rug, that is. In issue #13 Woozy Winks, who looks something like the then popular movie comedian Lou Costello, came along. After using his gift of invulnerability to commit a few crimes, Woozy reforms, too, and joins Plastic Man as sidekick. Their subsequent adventures mixed crime, violence, fantasy and satire. A dream sequence in #20 finds Cole even making fun of himself. Plastic Man, with several others besides Cole rendering many of his escapades, remained the star of the magazine until issue #102 (October, 1950). The magazine grew more serious after that, limping along as a sort of borderline true crime publication until the fall of 1953.

During his heyday Plas' only real competition came from the Spirit. Eisner's streetwise masked man first appeared in **Police** #11 (September, 1942). He was already two years old by this time, since the weekly **Spirit** booklets first showed up in newspapers Sunday comic sections in June of 1940. For the comic book reprint, by the way, Eisner added the Spirit's mask to the full face title panel portrait. He'd left that out the first time around. That initial episode was the orgin story, but from then on the stories were not reprinted in sequence and many of the newspaper originals were never unearthed at all. The Spirit hung on until that fateful 102nd issue, too. He appeared on the cover a few times, but always in the company of Plas, never as a single. With artwork by both Cole and Eisner, **Police** managed to be one of the better-looking comic books for the

next couple of years.

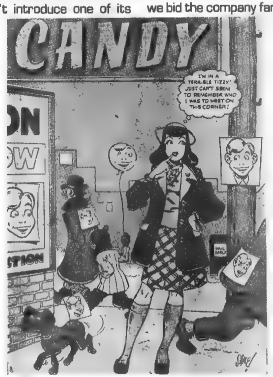
Other characters came and went in **Police's** early days. Manhunter (not to be confused with the several fellows who did business under this name over at DC) was introduced in #8 (March, 1942).Nicely drawn by the young Alex Kotzky, this was yet another strip about an impatient cop who dons a costume to fight crime as a freelance vigilante. What made the blackclad Manhunter especially unsettling to the underworld was his choice of companion. Deciding against a boy wonder, Manhunter worked with a giant, ferocious dog.

The aforementioned 711 had a funny thing happen to him in #15. He got killed. A bluejawed racketeer name of Oscar Jones did the job. After Jones gunned 711 down, Brenner explained in the final caption, "Yes, readers, 711 is DEAD! He was no superhuman being. He was alive, so the day had to come when he would die...it was his fate, his DESTINY. And if you look back to the preceding panel, you will see DESTINY in the background, that daring new character who starts in where 711 left off." Destiny worked in baggy business suit and after discovering he was gifted "with the occult power of foreseeing death, trouble and disaster that has already happened and that which will happen," he sets up as a crimefighter, Never mind how you FORESEE something that's already happened. Destiny devoted several issues to bringing the evil Oscar Jones to justice. He lasted until #36, displaying, after Brenner abandoned him, some of the most godawful artwork ever seen by man.

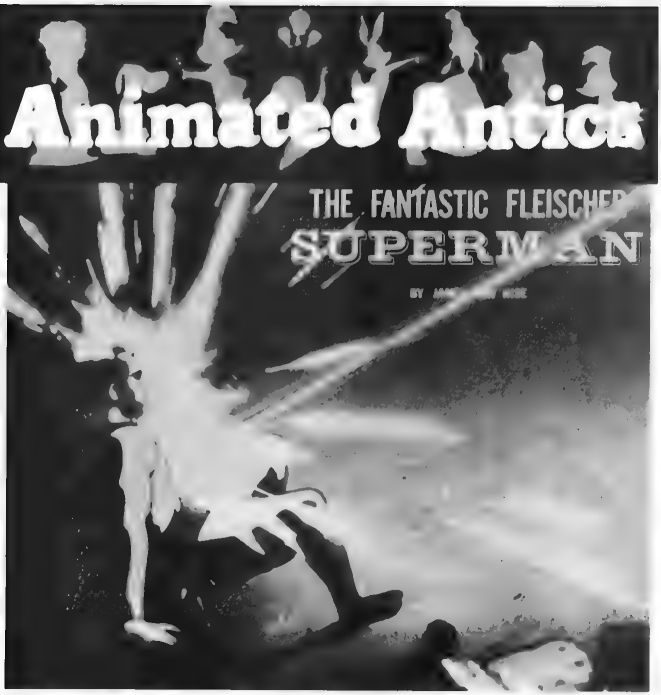
Amidst all the serious and semi-serious manhunting and crimebusting **Police** made room for a few funny one page fillers. Gill Fox, who also put in a stint as the magazine's editor, contributed **Super Snooper,** a page about an inept private eye. Both Johnny Devlin and Bernard Dibble worked on **Dewey Drip,** which dealt with a hillbilly who gets drafted. Cole, under his favorite penname of Ralph Johns, also did a onepager. It had to do with a chap named Burp the Twerp, also known as the Super So-and-so. What Burp was was a superhero, but an eccentric and bumbling one. He was bald, had a body like an overripe balloon and a shaggy white moustache. Cole used him to poke fun at the army of more sober-sided supermen who crowded the newsstands at the time, including his own Plastic Man. In a typical interlude Burp tries to enlist in the Army. He demonstrates some of his impressive abilities, explaining as he does, "I can shrink to two feet high...grow to fifty feet tall...pull myself into nothing...and expand to the size of an elephant." The recruiter rejects him, saying, "You're too short...too tall...too thin and too fat!!"

Police didn't introduce one of its most successful characters until the 37th issue. Not a crimefighter or a superperson, she was just a sexy teenager named Candy. The feature was drawn by the versatile Harry Sahle. Although not quite the artist Cole was, Sahle was also a man who could do both straight and funny stuff. By the time he did Candy he'd already worked on features ranging from the Human Torch to Archie. The middle 1940s was a period when teenagers were very much in demand in the **media.** Henry Aldrich was holding forth on the radio and in the movies, **Corliss Archer** and **A Date With Judy** were among the other radio shows devoted to bobby soxers. Sahle's teen ager caught on and she branched out into a magazine of her own and, for a time, a syndicated newspaper strip as well.

Once again we've used up our space. Next issue a look at **Military Comics** and **Blackhawk** and some of the later, lesser Quality titles before we bid the company farewell.



Animated Antics



In the bleak mountains overlooking Metropolis, a criminal mastermind crumples the front page of the latest edition of the **Daily Planet**, expressing his outrage over the city's refusal to meet his ransom demands. Accompanied by his cohorts, he descends into the deepest recesses of his hideaway to enter the sleek, powerful rocket car which then cruises down a long tunnel before being launched with a deafening whine of incredible engines which speed it into the cold nighttime sky.

The city waits, guards with machine guns prowling the streets. There is tension in the silence. Then it's seen, captured briefly in the spotlights as it streams through the heavens, it's own spotlight centered on its megalithic target, the city power plant. Like an angry metal demon, the rocket car smashes into the power plant and erupts from the other side, shooting skyward, the chatter of automatic gunfire drowned out by the exploding building.

Then Metropolis goes dark.

• • •

The scene described is not from the pages of an early comic book, but from the Paramount Superman cartoon "The Bulleteers," and it's one of the most effective sequences in the entire series of Superman cartoons which came out of the Fleischer studios in Miami, Florida in the early Forties.

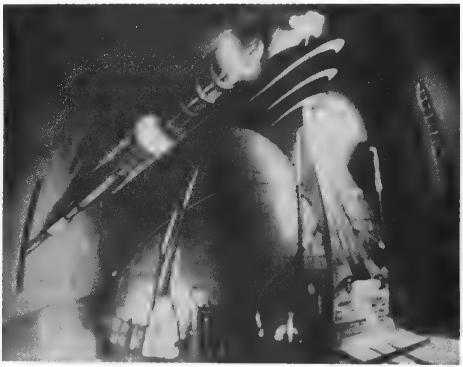
Unlike the Superman cartoons currently seen on Saturday mornings, the Fleischer Supermans were produced in the days when full

animation was a new art instead of the all but lost one it has become today.

For those who haven't seen them, the cartoons can be compared to what was being done in the early Disney features of the time as Fleischer Studios was an active competitor of Disney and was always striving to equal and outdo it in the realm of animation. They never succeeded in this goal, and in fact when Fleischer closed down, many of his animators went over to Disney looking for work. But in their day the Fleischer brothers produced some more than memorable animation fare.

Following the runaway success of the Superman character in comic books (which launched the sprawling era of the superhero comic which we know today), filmmakers sought out National Periodical Publications to negotiate the adaptation of the character to the silver screen. Republic Pictures (who had produced the Captain Marvel serial) were interested in acquiring the rights, but they refused to relinquish quality control to DC. C.C. Beck, the creator of Captain Marvel, describes Republic's attitude at the time as, "We don't need your help. We know how to make movies." Considering how super-heroes have generally fared at the merciless hands of Hollywood, it's apparent that this attitude still flourishes, the 1978 Superman motion picture being a rare exception.

Paramount secured the rights to produce animated cartoons, and then approached the Fleischers (This was before Paramount had wrested control of the animation studio away from the Fleischers). But Dave Fleischer protested that it would be much too expensive to produce because of the special effects it would require and the demands of realism in animation.



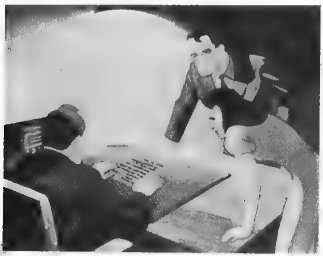
When Paramount asked how much, Dave Fleischer pulled a figure out of the air of $100,000.00, four times the cost of producing a regular cartoon at their studio. Paramount agreed to the figure and Fleischer found himself committed to producing the series.

Joe Schuster, the artist and co-creator of Superman, was flown to Miami to draw up character studies so that the cartoon version would resemble their comic book counterparts. With the exception of some hold-over elements from their regular humor cartoons which cropped up in their first Superman short, Fleischer Studios succeeded handsomely in following the character's look and presentation.

This was still fairly early in the comic strip career of the man from Krypton and he had not yet been festooned with every superpower imaginable to DC's stable of writers. The Superman of the Fleischer production did not fly (or more accurately levitate) with the grace of the man of steel who followed later. Here we had a Superman who didn't just leap into the air to gain flight, but who actually pushed off from the ground or buildings to launch himself into motion.

In order to work out the complicated special effects used in many of these cartoons, pencil tests were done (animated pencil drawings), some of which showed the man of steel leaping a tall building in a single bound. They felt it looked ridiculous on film, unlike the static motion of comics where imagination made all the right moves. The Fleischers thus received permission to make Superman's flying more graceful and fluid, more controlled, thus providing the link in the chain of circumstances which caused Superman and his powers to metamorphosize in the comic strip itself.

Oddly enough, though, one cartoon



Two scenes of the Fleischer Brothers Superman cartoons

did not use the more free-flowing motion of flight for the man of steel, for in "The Arctic Giant," the fourth episode released, Superman leaps with no more ease or grace than does the Hulk, quite different from the graceful power of flight he employed in the other cartoons.

When the first cartoon appeared in September 1941, it was released in the wake of an advertising blitz which included coming attraction trailers, something unheard of for an eight minute short.

The first episode, titled "Superman", featured all the hallmarks of the series, from complicated shadow work on the characters (called "modeling,") to intricate special effects like powerful, glowing beams of energy. The only drawback of this first cartoon was a curious comic-relief bird which hung around the mad scientist and seemed like something that would have been more at home in one of Fleischer's Popeye cartoons.

The voice of Superman in these animated classics was the late Bud Collyer, who was also the voice of radio's Superman in the Forties. Collyer's voice shifted dramatically from tenor to bass whenever he shucked his civilian attire and emerged as Superman. Collyer also returned as the vocal identity of the man of steel in the Sixties when a new series was created for Saturday morning viewing fare, but **that** series held nothing else in common with the Fleischer Brother version.

Since this series of cartoons had to be animated with more realism in mind than was needed in Fleischer's Popeye series, this sense was carried beyond just the animation of the principal characters. For the scene of a bridge destruction in the first cartoon, titled simply "Superman" (but also sometimes referred to as "The Mad Scientist"), a newsreel was studied which had recorded the breakup of the Silver Span bridge in Tacoma, Washington.

The directing techniques and angles used in these highly polished pieces of cinema were the same employed in making non-animated films. They used tracking shots, establishing shorts as well as dramatic closeups. Since this was full animation, the moods obtaineble from deep colors and fragile lighting were also employed.

The sound effects used in these cartoons were obtained through various means. For instance, in the brief sequence when Krypton is shown exploding, the crackling explosion was obtained by amplifying the sound made of an apple being broken in half by a sound man's hands. The amplified sounds of a sizzling steak stood up well as the electrical crackling of the super ray thrown against Superman in the very first cartoon.

While the Superman television series was generally more earth-bound then the strip in the menaces which were encountered, the Fleischer cartoons were much more in keeping with the spirit of the comic. The villains pitted against Superman included a mad scientist in no less than four of the cartoon shorts, as well as a dinosaur, various hoodlums, fifth columnists and even ancient gigantic mummies returned to life. Two of the closest to the comic book spirit are "The Bulleteers" and "The Mechanical Monsters."

In "The Bulleteers," they wear costumes very similar to those of Fawcett's character Bulletman, and the rocket car they pilot is super strong and capable of incredible speeds. It can even ram buildings at

high speed, a trait employed to wreck havoc in Metropolis. The climax when Superman finally catches up to it is quite spectacular as he crawls along the outside of the hull, gripping it to keep from falling, and finally peeling open the metal canopy.

"The Mechanical Monsters" is one of the best as it encapsulates all that was great about the Fleischer approach to this series, all in one cartoon! The story involves super robots which are robbing jewels from Metropolis. When tracked down, Superman engages in battle with no less than a dozen of them at once. He defeats them and then crashes down a door to rescue Lois. Lois is bound below a huge vat of molten steel. The villain orders Superman to halt or he'll dump the vat. Superman flinches involuntarily and the crook panics, hitting the switch. Superman leaps forward, lands behind Lois and spreads his cape as a shield, causing the molten metal to cascade off his back in one of the most impressive moments in animation ever seen.

A poorly copied version of this cartoon appeared in the late Seventies film **The Fantastic Animation Festival.**

As mentioned earlier, Superman wasn't all-powerful in these eight minute adventures and in fact was often given stiff competition, having to slowly dig his way out from beneath rubble in one and straining his utmost to stand up beneath a super energy barrage in another.

In "The Magnetic Telescope," a device holding an asteroid near Earth in order to study it is damaged, and when Superman is **unable** to divert the heavenly body's course, he uses his own body to join the severed cable and enable the machine to use its titantic forces to push the planetoid back into space while super energies pulsate through Superman all the while.

Superman battles mechanical monsters in early cartoons.

The original music in these mini-extravaganzas was by Sammy Timberg, who provided as much atmosphere in his own way as the animators did in theirs.

The head animators on this series included Willard Bowsky as well as Orestes Calpini, the latter having brought some unusual stylistic approaches to the storytelling, as evidenced in "Jungle Drums."

The stories in these cartoons were often more unusual than you'd think for the Forties. In "Electrical Earthquake," the mad scientist was an Indian who wanted to reclaim Manhatten for all other Indians. Interestingly, all the action took place on Manhattan Island, where the **Daily Planet** seemed to be located!

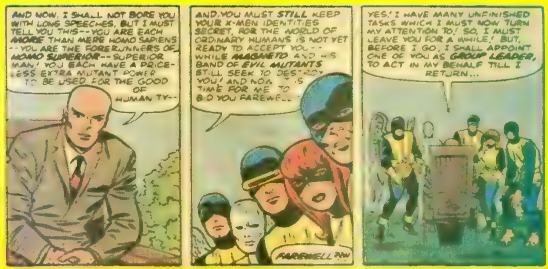
These seventeen little gems are rarely seen today (although some are available on videotape), but when they are viewed, it's obvious that this is what animation was meant to accomplish when realism is the goal and the setting is pure imagination.

THE FLEISCHER SUPERMAN CARTOONS

(All dates given are year of release)

1) Superman (1941)
2) The Mechanical Monsters (1941)
3) The Billion Dollar Limited (1942)
4) The Arctic Giant (1942)
5) The Bulleteers (1942)
6)The Magnetic Telescope (1942)
7) The Electrical Earthquake (1942)
8) Volcano (1942)
9) Terror on the Midway (1942)
10) The Japoteurs (1942)
11) Showdown (1942)
12) Eleventh House (1942)—(Superman goes to Japan and punches them out!)
13) Destruction, Inc. (1942)
14) The Mummy Strikes (1943)
15) Jungle Drum (1943)
16) Underground World (1943)
17) Secret Agent (1944)

X-MEN


AND NOW, I SHALL NOT BORE YOU WITH LONG SPEECHES. BUT I MUST TELL YOU THIS--YOU ARE EACH MORE THAN MERE HOMO SAPIENS --YOU ARE THE FORERUNNERS OF... HOMO SUPERIOR--SUPERIOR MAN! YOU EACH HAVE A PRICELESS EXTRA MUTANT POWER TO BE USED FOR THE GOOD OF HUMAN TY--
AND YOU MUST STILL KEEP YOUR X-MEN IDENTITIES SECRET, FOR THE WORLD OF ORDINARY HUMANS IS NOT YET READY TO ACCEPT YOU-- WHILE MAGNETO AND HIS BAND OF EVIL MUTANTS STILL SEEK TO DESTROY YOU AND NOW IS TIME FOR ME TO B-D YOU FAREWE--
FARRELL 84
YES, I HAVE MANY UNFINISHED TASKS WHICH I MUST NOW TURN MY ATTENTION TO! SO, I MUST LEAVE YOU FOR A WHILE! BUT BEFORE I GO, I SHALL APPOINT ONE OF YOU AS GROUP LEADER, TO ACT IN MY BEHALF TILL I RETURN...

The X-Men
by James Van Hise

© 1984 Marvel

He had a group, an idea, a story, but he didn't have a name; at least he didn't have a name which the publisher liked.

When Stan Lee conceived The X-Men, it was because he wanted to create a new super team comprised of characters who were born with their abilities, rather than acquiring them through some far-fetched accident. Taking the biological concept of the mutant, something which shows a variation not found in its parents, Stan had come up with a new direction that he had been looking for. He'd even settled on a title for the book: **The Mutants.** The only problem was that then-publisher Martin Goodman thought it was too obscure a word and that the little kids who bought comic books wouldn't understand what it meant. Lee's arguments that there was a wider audience that he was aiming at while still retaining the interest of the bubblegum brigade, fell on deaf ears. Examining what a mutant was, he defined it has having something extra. A mutant could be considered as being an extraordinary human, or in commercial comic book shorthand, an X-man.

This gave the book an air of mystery which probably helped it when it first appeared in the summer of '63, although the fact that it appeared on the stands along with **Avengers #1** and the first Fantastic Four annual couldn't have hurt either.

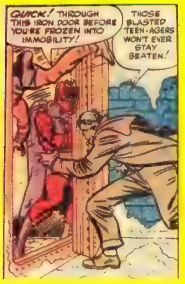
While the first issue was certainly interesting, and the introduction of Magneto (who has been to the X-Men what Dr. Doom has been to the Fantastic Four) made for a great start, what with Kirby's striking costume design, the book just wasn't as different as it seemed. It didn't take too discerning a fan to realize that the characters were offshoots of the F.F. Instead of a flaming character, there was an icy one. There was even a homely, super-strong character who used a lot of slang, as well as a super-intelligent group leader. But fans quickly picked up on something else as well. The X-Men were conceived around late '62, about the time that DC published **My Greatest Adventure #80** which introduced "The Doom Patrol," strange characters (although **not** mutants) who'd been brought together by a mysterious wheelchair-bound genius. The coincidence seemed a little too close, although no more was done or said about that than was said years later when DC introduced The Swamp Thing right after Marvel did the Man-Thing. These things happen.

The first eleven issues of **The X-Men** were drawn by Jack Kirby, and other than a nagging reuse of The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants in numbers 4, 5, 6 and 7, they were an interesting run, climaxing in #10 which introduced Ka-Zar and the Savage Land in a rousing adventure which took place all in one issue. Although Kirby did one more issue, almost anything would seem an anti-climax after everything Kirby came up with in #10.

While the title lasted for years after Kirby left it, it seemed to be searching for itself, never certain which direction to go or what to do with the characters as they moved from one adventure to another which usually impacted very little on them as human beings. There were exceptions, though.

Before Stan Lee left the book as writer with #20 (when Roy Thomas replaced him), Prof. X's half-brother Cain Marko (the Juggernaut) was introduced in #12 and #14 brought on The Sentinels, the latter being as closely identified with the X-Men as anything anyone ever did in the series.

By this time the character of the



© 1964 Marvel

The X-Men frequently had to battle their counter-parts, the Evil Mutants.

Beast had been altered so that he was an intelligent, eloquent personality rather than a Ben Grimm clone. Thus the original X-Men included Professor X (who was killed off by Thomas in #42 and brought back by him in #65), Cyclops (who fires powerful optic blasts and is little different today than when he was introduced in 1963 when he was called "Slim" Summers, a nickname that was quickly dropped), Iceman (Bobby Drake, who could ice up his body and whose origin appeared in issues #44-46), the Angel (whose sole power is that of flight due to his wings and whose origin appeared in #14), the Beast (Hank McCoy who underwent a metamorphosis in **Amazing Adventures #11** into a blue-furred character who then went on to become involved with the Avengers and later the Defenders as had both Iceman and The Angel), Marvel Girl (Jean Grey, who died in #100 only to be reborn as Phoenix, whose powers dwarfed those she previously had and who then went out of control as Dark Phoenix).

There were other part-time X-Men such as the Mimic who first fought them in #19, and then reformed to join the group in #27-29 until he lost his power.

Alex Summers (Havok) first turned up in #54 and although he fought alongside the X-Men after learning to control his power, he was never formally a member and turns up only now and then.

The original X-Men had some interesting high points such as numbers 50 and 51 which were drawn by Jim Steranko, but the most memorable issues were at the end of the original run when Roy Thomas scripted and Neal Adams pencilled numbers 56-63 and 65. Tom Palmer inked, and even when Don Heck did #64 as a fill-in issue, it was drawn to imitate Adams so amazingly that you have to look twice at it to see that it's merely a fine imitation. Those last few issues brought the X-Men together in one gripping story after another which balanced character and plot in a manner more familiar with what would be done in the book under Chris Claremont years later. The art is some of Neal Adams most enervating work and he also plotted #65, which formed a moving climax to the run. (These Adams issues were reprinted by Marvel in a special high quality format available only in comic shops). The run lasted one more issue, but even with the Hulk as a guest star the book seemed dead on its feet after the high energy impact of the Thomas/Adams issues.

Several months later the title was revived as a reprint book, ostensibly to keep the characters active in some form due to undisclosed plans that Marvel had for them.

Whatever those plans were, they were kicked around, abandoned and changed until 4½ years later **Giant Size X-Men #1** appeared in 1975

The Scarlet Witch started out as a member of the Evil Mutants but eventually became a heroine.

(recently reprinted in a special quality edition available in comic shops).

Marvel had come up with the idea that if they could put together a team composed of characters from many nations, that they'd have a big hit in the overseas market. Roy Thomas suggested the X-Men as an ideal format for this and the team underwent revisions. Although Prof. X was still the ever-present mentor, it was decided to keep Cyclops in order to have some tie between the new X-Men and the old X-Men. It was also felt that he was the most interesting member of the old team due to his tregic overtones in that he could never look at another human being with his unshielded eyes.

The new X-Men were gathered together by Prof. X in **Giant Size #1**. They consisted of Nightcrawler (who can teleport), Wolverine, (a Canadian who was originally part of what would become known as Alpha Flight but who quit to become a free agent when Xavier offered him the chance to employ his heightened senses and adamantium plated skeleton which was

MEANWHILE, HEARING THE IRON DOOR SHUT, ICEMAN DEFROSTS THE CHAMBER AND, AS THE ILLUSIONARY FOG FADES AWAY...
CAUGHT AGAIN! WE'RE LOCKED IN HERE WITH SUB-MARINER AND THE SCARLET WITCH!
WHAT DO WE DO, NOW?
KEEP CALM. WE'VE GOT TO PLAY THIS BY EAR.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH QUICKSILVER? I DEMAND THAT YOU RELEASE HIM.
WITH MAGNETO GONE, THESE PIECES OF METAL ARE NO LONGER MAGNETIZED TO MY BODY AND NOW
YOU'RE IN FOR IT, NOW, SO MAYBE I'M ANGRY, TOO!

The Evil Mutants originally thought Namor was a mutant and invited him to join them. But in the end it is discovered that Namor is no mutant and he goes on his way, alone, as ever.

once referred to as solid admantium until someone pointed out that human bones manufacture the body's blood supply), Storm [an orphan who grew up in the wilds of Kenya, East Africa and who as a child lived as a thief in the streets until maturing into a locally worshipped goddess due to her control of weather], Colossus [aka Peter Rasputin, a Russian who uses his ability to turn his body into something akin to armor plating for international benefit after being convinced by Professor X], Thunderbird [an American Indian, on borrowed time from the start as he was created solely to be killed off in his third outing in **X-Men #95** as his powers and personality were similar to those of Wolverine which would have made him a sort of fifth wheel] and Sprite [also known as Ariel and Kitty Pryde, the newest and youngest X-Man, who, at only fourteen, is possessed of the ability to phase through solid objects much as the Vision of the Avengers can].

Len Wein, who essentially created the new X-Men, was only involved with the title for the first couple stories and then left the book. Chris Claremont was involved with the writing beginning with **X-Men #94**, the second story of the new X-Men.

The artist on the new X-Men up through issue #107 was Dave Cockrum. His approach to the X-Men was quite different from either John Byrne or Paul Smith and his work on the early issues suffers only in comparison to the more slick approach brought to the book later. Len Wein conceived these new X-Men as being teenagers and this is how Cockrum drew them. Claremont later decided their ages should be more varied, but when Cockrum returned to the title for several months beginning with #145, he drew them all like teenagers again which made it all seem very awkward. Whether for this reason or post-Byrne depression, sales slumped until Paul Smith took over the title [a 50,000 copy jump was recorded with his first issue], although Smith left to be replaced by John Romita, Jr.

Chris Claremont began putting the new X-Men through changes almost from the start, but it was when John Byrne began his long stint on the title [#108-143] that the book really came alive as this team meshed the way an artist/writer team should. John Byrne put a lot of his own input into the stories and would become annoyed when something he drew one way would be scripted by Claremont another way later, which led to occasional creative conflicts. It was over this sort of frustration, and a refusal by Claremont to give Byrne equal say in the direction the stories would go, that he finally left the title to be writer/artist on the **Fantastic Four**. Byrne recently took a sort of Canadian version of the X-Men which he'd created in the title, called Alpha Flight, and gave it it's own magazine, which fans have been responding to enthusiastically.

One can only wonder where the book would have gone had Byrne stayed with it as two of his last issues, **X-Men #141-142** contained one of the best stories to ever appear in the title. "Days of Future Past" was a time travel tale involving dual, related stories. The Kitty Pryde of years in the future is able to briefly have her mind sent into her past self in order to warn the X-Men so that they can prevent the murder of a presidential candidate which would ultimately mean the end of the world in the future. While the present day X-Men perform their mission, we see the future from which Kitty Pryde briefly escaped, a future where Sentinels hunt down and capture or destroy any superpowered being, whether mutant or no. One by one we see the murder of all the X-Men we know, those of Storm and Wolverine being the most shocking.

There are many standout stories in the Claremont/Byrne series. Issues #111-116 are especially good, as are the Dark Phoenix stories. This series, which involved Jean Grey's powers warping her and twisting her into the insane Dark Phoenix, climaxed in

#137 when she committed suicide in order to prevent Dark Phoenix from ever rising again. But that's not how Chris Claremont planned it. He'd originally written #137 so that Jean Grey was stripped of her powers forever because Dark Phoenix had destroyed a planet of four billion people. But when editor Jim Shooter saw the pencilled pages he rejected them because even though Claremont's editor, Jim Salicrup, had approved the story, Shooter hadn't seen it until it was drawn. Shooter felt that Phoenix was getting off too lightly and should be imprisoned under eternal torture for her acts, even though she was insane at the time she committed them. Rather than do that, Claremont just had her kill herself with an ancient Kree weapon left on the moon in the blue area. Even this was sabotaged by his disputes with John Byrne because he wanted it to be a weapon in the house of The Watcher which exists in that blue area, but when Byrne drew those pages he didn't like that idea and changed it. By this time, Claremont was so depressed over the entire situation that he just let it go, but Byrne's actions could only have hastened the breakup of the team.

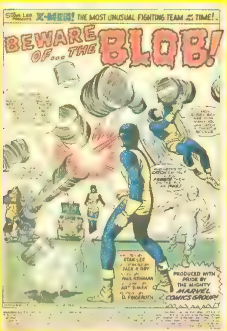
Ever since she died, fans have been wondering if Phoenix will return, and although Shooter claims she's dead, Claremont has been dropping hints in recent stories about a new Phoenix storyline to come. Whether this had anything to do with Paul Smith's departure (over creative differences, just as Byrne's was) is unknown.

Paul Smith's vivid and powerful style has brought just as much verve to the title as Byrne's very different style did. Whereas inker Bob Wiacek isn't suited to some pencillers, his style meshes perfectly with Smith, just as Austin's brought out every stroke of power in Byrne's pencils. The real test is that reproduction of the Smith/Wiacek art is crisp and clear with no haziness to the art at all, whereas Byrne's inking of his own pencils is consistently plagued by muddy translation to the comic book page.

Under Claremont, the X-Men has become a much more brutal and realistic title over the past few years. Even the word grim might apply. While in interviews he has talked about pulling back in the other direction, in #170 he pulled a shocker when Storm, who has sworn never to kill, stabs a vicious opponent through the heart. Although she no doubt knew that a mutant was present who would save the woman, the undisguised brutality of the act and the lack of recriminations remains to haunt the reader.

One of the weirdest stories Claremont ever did took place under the Claremont/Smith team when the X-Men encountered bizarre alien beings which Wolverine dubbed "the sleazoids." As with #143, Claremont was once more indulging in an homage to all that H.R. Giger did for the film **Alien** in that Giger's bizarre monster has become the monster cliche of the Eighties, and nowhere is it more present than in Claremont's X-Men. On the plus side, the story these creatures populated was filled with other sorts of wonders which didn't rely on the Sleazoids to strengthen their invention. The most talked about moment in **X-Men #165** is when Kitty Pryde, who loves Peter Rasputin, offers her 14 year old self to him in an understated scene whose intentions are all too clear, but Peter does have a nice way of saying, "This is not the proper time or place."

Although conceived with the foreign market in mind, the new X-Men have become a sensation everywhere.


X-MEN! THE MOST UNUSUAL FIGHTING TEAM OF ALL TIME!
BEWARE OF THE BLOB!
STAN LEE
JOHN BUSCEMA
TOM ORZECHOWSKI
JOE SINNOTT
PRODUCED WITH PRIDE BY THE MIGHTY MARVEL COMICS GROUP!

Under the magic touch of Kirby and Lee the early X-Men displayed a vitality that was not seen again until Claremont took over the book. Only Professor X remains from the early days of this book about young mutants.

Guest appearances in other books are guaranteed to boost sales. Wolverine, the controversial and violent member of the team (whose personality seems to be rubbing off on Storm lately), was a hit in his own four issue mini-series drawn by Frank Miller. Old issues are being reprinted. A lukewarm companion title, **The New Mutants**, was launched last year (dubbed "the X-babies" by the X-Men's own Kitty Pryde), and Brent Anderson drew a popular X-Men graphic novel published book size on slick paper. Mary Jo Duffy even wrote an X-Men prose story for Marvel Novel Series #9: **The Marvel Superheroes**, published in 1979.

Whereas in the Sixties **The X-Men** seemed the ugly duckling of the Marvel line, in the Seventies and Eighties they've matured into the consistently enduring hit of the Marvel Age.

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

By T. I. Pavaro

Last issue we spent our time solving our identity crisis and deciding on what would be an intelligent procedure for beginning our collection.

To refresh our collective memory let's list those steps once again:

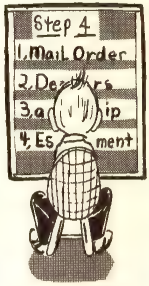
1) Decide on the parameters of the collection—what is to be collected and under what criteria of selection (will it be a particular character's exploits, a particular book or type of book or the works of that certain writer or artist or both?) while taking such factors as finance and situation into account;

2) Decide how and where the collection will be stored and preserved;

3) Decide the amount of time and effort to be devoted to the collection (and money too, of course) at which point we quickly realized that we would face a trade-off and that either money or time could compensate for the other to some degree; and

4) Decide where and how to search for the books—whether by dealing only with other collectors, attending conventions, dealing with mail-order dealers or establishing a regular relationship with one or more local retail establishments.

Having established the basic criteria it is now time to begin looking a little more closely at the individual steps involved. This time around we are going to take a look at the relative advantages and disadvantages of the different methods of obtaining books. In our usual orderly fashion we will begin with step four, the last step, and later readdress some of the other points.



First, let us mutually agree to one thing at the beginning and once we accept this we will have a much happier time of the whole process. It is highly unlikely that we will be able to build our collection on either good luck or the mistakes of others (and it is also questionable how much we would enjoy doing the latter). We will have to face the simple fact that depending on what we have decided to collect the items will have an accepted value. That is why I suggested that the issue of devoting funds be approached at two earlier points in the process so that by the time we are actually ready to get out and start searching we will have reconciled ourselves to this.

Just as with any other item we might purchase, the established value depends both on the item itself and what steps of the process we do ourselves as opposed to having done for us by others who must be paid for their work. If you purchase a car you have several progressively more expensive choices of how you do so. For the moment let's choose not to consider used—or "previously owned" vehicles as the comforting metaphor would have it. Purchasing a new car can be roughly broken down into the following options: purchasing the body and engine and other parts independently and assembling the vehicle on our own; purchasing the vehicle in some fashion directly from the manufacturer through some unusual contact we may have; or purchasing the car from a normal retail dealership. The first method of obtaining our vehicle involves a tremendous amount of work and time to locate and assemble each proper part and then actually unite them in the final construction of an automobile. The second requires less work but special contacts which also take time to cultivate and utilize. And the third method takes the least effort, simply walking into a showroom and purchasing whatever we most want, but costs the most as a consequence. This is also true of purchasing a comic book, the price depending, as we have seen, on how we do so.

Locating other collectors and talking them out of their gems can be quite time-consuming and not at all reliable as you may find that the collectors you deal with do not have the books you need or do not wish to part with them if they do. Remember, they are also collectors and share your pack rat mentality. You will have to find something more enticing to them than the book which you want, and money will usually not do the trick any more

then it would if you were offered wealth to part with your goodies. There are, of course, many benefits to dealing with other collectors aside from obtaining their possessions. On a purely social level it is invaluable to have others to share your mania and at a practical level you may be able to persuade them to help seek out your needs as they hunt their own, for which favor they will more than likely wish you to reciprocate.

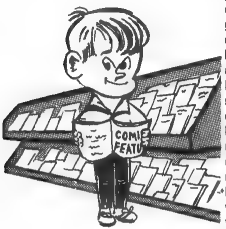
Attending conventions can be more reliable if you are located in an area where comic book conventions are reasonably frequent and tend to attract a good range of dealers. Many parts of the country, though, only have conventions once a year and even then attract very few merchants or collectors displaying their wares. Some dealers at conventions do indeed offer worthwhile bargains but as time goes on, more and more convention dealers are merely store retailers having brought along their wares—and unfortunately, their prices as well. If you do luck upon low priced merchandise—grab it—but first, check very carefully. Check that the book is authentically what you feel it to be and that it is definitely in the condition that you are paying for. Remember, if you purchase the book and later find that it is missing a value stamp or has a coupon clipped the odds are very small that you will relocate the dealer to have the matter corrected. In less than a few days the convention will end and the dealers will pack and go home. The dealer you bought it from might not even realize the defect was present.

Mail order firms have their advantages and their disadvantages. This is the only method by which you will be expected to purchase your book before you even see it and then accept on trust that the prize will be what you hoped for. Other collectors, convention dealers and retailers will show you their books and let you have a look at their merits before you ever have to pay them; mail order by its nature cannot allow for this. Many mail order dealers differ in their grading standards and when you comparison price their items you have to be very careful that you are comparing books in the same condition as the slightest variance in condition will make a very major difference in value.

You will also have to try to stay aware of the possibility of fraud. While this is not common it does happen and it is always very difficult to obtain satisfaction on these matters. Now that we have warned you with the negative aspects of this transaction we will hasten to add that there are many benefits to dealing with a reliable dealer of this sort. The obvious factor of locality is the first. No matter where you are located this type of dealer is never more than a mail box away. All of his offerings, and many offer very elaborate catalogs,

are yours for the sending and any reliable outfit will be more than happy to assist you in collecting. Their stock is usually greater than any local store serving only one geographic area can sensibly maintain. The better ones are no less dependable than any store, in fact many of them own stores. Very little effort on your part is needed to partake of their services, merely the willingness to search their catalogs, send letters or make phone calls of inquiry and send on the needed dollars. You will then just have to sit back and your treasure will show up on your doorstep, although it will require some patience to wait for it to do so. You will find reliable dealers advertising in the pages of this magazine or of other publications and in the comic books themselves.

Also worthy of mentioning at this point are the various new-comics-by-mail services as these can be a lifesaver. In fact, if you are not fortuitous enough to be located near a comic book specialty store, and they are still somewhat rare through much of the country, they are the only way for you to obtain many of the "direct-market-only" comic books (the many titles and even companies which are only selling through specialty stores) which you will want. And these include some of the very best books. Again there are some very reliable dealers involved in marketing this way, including some of the largest comic book retailers in the country. Plus this method has the advantage of avoiding time-consuming trips to a shop.



Last, and certainly not least, is the specialty store. And this is my chosen method of obtaining the books I desire. This is a store which is established for the sole purpose of providing for the needs of the comic book buyer (and similar related products such as movie magazines, collector's cards or role-playing games). The store simply would not exist without the support of comic book fanatics and both the owners and the employees involved know this. Here you are king. Here in a good store, you will find, colorfully displayed, all of the many comic books—both those of the mass market and the specialty items including fanzines, collectors supplies, undergrounds, "direct-market-only" books and just about anything else your heart could desire. The particular store which I shop at goes so far as to maintain all Baxter books (those books printed on the white, heavier offset paper) for at least a year at cover price, all regular comics for six months at cover price and carries everything from Japanese animation books to European graphic albums to every obscure underground and fanzine. It is truely a fantastic place for anyone interested in the graphic arts. Plus they display everything in nice bright racks with good lighting and temperature control and wood paneling on the walls. Many other stores are just as nice and this is where you should be able to find your home away from home with a more than sympathetic manager who will go out of this way to fulfill the needs of your collection. Since this last method of obtaining books, the local store, is as important as it is we will discuss the many services which should be available as well as the relative merit of establishing liason with one or many stores in our next installment. At that time we will also finally approach the matter of grading for condition.

The Olde Bookdealer
GUD BOOX

STEVE BISSETTE

A.B. Frost mastered pen and ink during the late 1800s. His wiry drolleries were a staple of the early comic strips that entertained readers of **Harper's Weekly** and **Life**, years before the coming of "Hogan's Alley", the character of the Yellow Kid and the resulting generations of newspaper comic strips. It's hard to come by any examples of his work today [see page 82 of **The Comics Journal,** #86, Nov. 1981], so it's a real delight to find a paperback edition of Joel Chandler Harris's **Uncle Remus** [Shocken Books, 1965, for only $2.95] within easy reach, complete with A.B. Frost's definitive renditions of Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox and their cohorts. If you've never read the Harris original, written in dialect, you owe yourself the pleasure of doing so, for very little of the considerable substance and wit of Harris's achievements [he would write **ten** Uncle Remus books before his death] survives the constant distillation and rehashing that Brer Rabbit and friends have been through over the years [Disney's **Song of the South**, etc.]. Frost's contribution to this classic of Americana makes the tales all the more vivid; Harris himself was overjoyed with Frost's illustrations when they first saw print in 1895. Just shy of a century later, they still ring the truest, and Brer Rabbit has never looked better.

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Leaving the legendary Deep South, there be a couple of items hailing from on up New England way might be of some interest. Stephen King's latest offerings outside of the best-sellers market, for example, bear mentioning as they might slip by those of you who enjoy King's yarns as much as I [and a helluvalotta other people on the planet] obviously do. King's novella "The Mist" surfaces in a Bantam paperback collection of new horror writings entitled **Dark Forces**, edited by Kirby McCauley, and though its origins may lay in the trappings of 1950s monster movies like **Cosmic Monsters** and **The Crawling Eye** [whose beasties also moved through a mysterious mobile mist], King has much more on his mind and up his sleeve than the creators of those low-budget thrillers could ever muster.

Stephen King and Walt Simonson—Lawnmower Man

No big surprise there, perhaps, since one **expects** to find King's latest on the paperback racks, but he's also made his presence known on the magazine racks. The pages of Marvel's **Bizarre Adventures #28** boasts King's own canny, lean comic script adaptation of his short story "The Lawnmower Man", as deftly envisioned by Walt Simonson. Even more unexpected, and totally unheralded, is King's appearance in the pages of **Yankee** magazine for November 1981, with a previously unpublished story "Do The Dead Sing?" It is, of course, a horror tale, but a subdued one that relies on its evocation of people, place [Maine, natch], and the bitter extremes of New England for much of its effect...those being the ingredients that make this particular King story right at home between the snug covers of **Yankee**.

There's also another monster tale in the pages of the February 1982 **Yankee**, this is one about the monster that is said to lurk in the Vermont waters of Lake Champlain, and just to prove to you that this one's for real, there's a remarkable color photo of the creature there for all to see. Sandra Mansi took the picture in July of 1977, and what you **don't** see is as exasperating as what you **do** see is compelling. Scientific analysis of the photo confirms that the image has not been tampered with [see the article in **The New York Times**, June 30, 1981, pp. C1 & C2], but it's going to take more than this to convince unbelievers. Word has it that there are six new photos of the critter being analyzed, though, so who knows?

All the ballyhoo surrounding the Lake Champlain monster has resulted in a really neat book for kids and interested elders called [what else?] **The Champlain Monster** [Lanswer Press, 1981], written and illustrated by the prolific Jeff Danziger. Danziger's loose and limber style of cartooning has been gracing the editorial pages of Vermont papers like the **Times Argus** and **Rutland Herald** for some time now, spawning four or five collections of his work [also from Lanswer Press] and an ever-growing legion of loyal fans. **The Champlain Monster** is, for my money, Danziger's most ambitious and appealing undertaking yet, weaving the lovingly realized local color and characters that are key to all of his cartoons into the framework of an effective adventure story that carries considerable punch and charm. The duo-toned illustrations also represent his most accomplished work as

Danziger's CHAMPLAIN MONSTER

a cartoonist to date, and mark Jeff Danziger as a creator whose future creations deserve (and undoubtably will receive) a wider audience.

***

I could go on and on about all the worthwhile books out on dinosaurs these days, but I won't. I'll just mention a few that you might be unaware of. In this corner, on the remainder shelves, there's a bulky, profusely illustrated hardcover by Michael Tweedie entitled **The World of Dinosaurs** (William Morrow & Co., Inc., 1977; not to be confused with L.B. Halstead's **The World of Dinosaurs**, Banner Press's lackluster reprint of a European edition originally entitled **The Evolution and Ecology of the Dinosaur**; also not to be confused with John Heritage's **The Mysterious World of Dinosaurs** from Octopus Books, chock full of color paintings by W. Francis Phillipps...oh, I did say I wouldn't go on, didn't. Tweedie incorporates many of the new discoveries, theories, and debates that came to light in the 1970s, going into exhaustive detail whenever necessary, making his text one of the most informative and enjoyable reads recently available to the discerning dinosaur connoisseur. Adding to this attractive volume's charisma are the many full-color recreations of prehistoric life, most of which are presented in huge double-page spreads. These are credited to a studio, Wilcok Riley Graphic Art, though thankfully the best of these watercolors **are** signed by their artist, A.T. Riley.

The real cream of the crop, though is buried over here, in two books entitled **Life Before Man** (text by Zdenek V. Spinar; Crescent Books, New York 1972) and **The Dawn of Man** (text by Josef Wolf; Harry N. Abrams, Inc, New York, 1978), and what makes them so very special is that they showcase 350 color paintings by Czechoslovakian master Zdenek Burian. Burian's paintings are beyond compare: rigorously researched, richly detailed, impeccably rendered. His work is rarely seen here, save for the occasional reproduction in this or that magazine or encyclopedia, an unfortunate situation which these books effectively remedy.

Burian has attempted to bring to his canvas as complete a tapestry of the evolution of life on this planet as is humanly possible for one artist to do in one lifetime. No small feat, that, and the incredible array of illustrations visible in these companion volumes apparently represents only a small portion of his output (which also includes some marvelous pictures for Edgar Rice Burrough's **Tarzan** series). Although the text of both books may seem occasionally dated amid the deluge of new information from paleantology and evolutionary studies, Burian's paintings have only grown in stature, glowing with the life and imagination of an artist whose vision, talents and dedication are nothing less than staggering.

Burian is not the first to focus his life's work on breathing life into long-extinct animals; his American predecessor, Charles Robert Knight, broke the ground for each and every artist, child or adult, who ever applied themselves to the restorations of those glorious monsters.

Burian paintings

GUD BOOX

Knight is the subject of a new book, **Dinosaurs, Mammoths, and Cavemen: The Art of Charles R. Knight** (E.P. Dutton, 1982), by Sylvia Massey Czerkas and Donald F. Glut, which is definitely worth a look at any price. There is also the rare chance that you may stumble across one of the Knight's own books (**Before the Dawn of History**, McGrew-Hill, 1935; **Life Through the Ages**, Alfred A. Knopf, 1946; among others) at library sales, book auctions, etc. and any of these precious tomes are highly recommended.

The only American painter to carry Knight's torch with any comparable success and inspiration is Rudolph F. Zallinger, whose intricately realized murals for the Smithsonian, painted during the late 1940s, are deservedly famous (and still available in wieldy color reproductions from The Smithsonian Institute, P.O. Box 2456, Washington, D.C. 20013). Zallinger's wonderful color paintings for **The Giant Golden Book of Dinosaurs and Other Prehistoric Reptiles** (by Jane Werner Watson; Golden Press, New York, 1960, and currently in its 23rd printing) are faithfully reproduced in all their splendor in this outsized (12" x 10½") volume, and they still make this the most accessible, and arguably the definitive, dinosaur book for children.

Charles Knight's reconstruction of Tyrannosaurus Rex (above), reigning giant of the Cretaceous plains; and the leader of the Bontotherium pack (below), among the largest land mammals to ever walk the Earth. Both details from the massive murals Knight painted for the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago prior to 1930...fifty years later, they remain as atmospheric, alive and definitive as ever.

While you're over there in the kid's books gallery, you might take a peek at the Golden Look-Look Book **Dinosaurs** by Kathleen N. Daly (also from Golden Press, 1978/77), especially if you're an admirer of the Brothers Hildebrandt. This is one of the books Greg and Tim Hildebrandt illustrated before publishers had any inkling of what they are capable of, and how capable they are of **doing** it. The watercolors here are deceptively simple and pleasing, with an eye for bright color combinations suitable to the young audience the Look-Look Book titles are designed for. A few years ago this little item sold for 95 cents and sported an original watercolor cover painting by the Hildebrandts depicting a tyrannosaurus and a pterosaur rendered in bright yellows and oranges; the currently available $1.25 printing lifts the interior illos of a greenish gorgosaurus (looking essentially identical to the tyrannosaur) and pterodactyl as its cover art, and someone also saw fit to add a fine layer of fur to the three flying pterosaurs inside, no doubt to keep up with the contemporary attitudes

about just how these antediluvian things **ought** to look.

Another tyrannosaurus painted by a seasoned Tim Hildenbrandt graces the cover of Avon/Rare's **The Science Fictional Dinosaur** [edited by Robert Silverberg, Charles G. Waugh and Martin Harry Greenberg], a paperback collection of short stories by the likes of Isaac Asimov, Poul Anderson, Harry Harrison, Mr. Silverberg and others. The glimpses of bygone eras featured here range from the romantic (via Paul Ash's friendly pteranodon and Robert F. Young's "When Time Was New") to a nasty grit-and-shit infested existance that is probably closer to the reality of the prehistoric world than most of us would care to think about (Brian Aldiss's "Poor Little Warrior!", wherein the gnarled skin of a brontosaur seethes with dog-sized parasites, "gay as ghosts, cruel as crabs"). It's almost as much fun as rereading the collected "War That Time Forgot" comics, and rest assured that these authors can write rings around Bob Kanigher most any day.

Primordial pleasures reside in an earlier Silverberg, Greenberg, and Joseph Olander edited opus, **Dawn of Time: Prehistory Through Science Fiction** [Elsevier/Nelson, 1979, N.Y.].

Conspicuous by his absence in both Silverberg and associates' collections is author **Ray Bradbury**, whose own poetic saurian short story stew is currently available under the more succinct title **Dinosaur Tales** [Bantam, 1983], with accompanying illustrations commissioned by Byron Preiss from some notable commercial and comic artisans. Classy, classical design, with decorative borders and nearly every other page boasting a double-page spread of art, makes for a pleasing and distinctive presentation of both Bradbury's text and the stylish visualizations of each tale and poem.

Kenneth Smith (**Phantasmagoria**) and Overton Loyd [album cover artist and airbrush delineator of Ellison's multi-lined alien rabbis in another Byron Preiss book, **The Illustrated Harlan Ellison**] offer lovably roly-poly dinos who can dance, sing and hatch little Bradburys from enigmatic eggs. The same playful innocence pervades children's book illustrator David Wiesner's pencil evocations of a rural boy's bizarre saurian yearnings, Gahan Wilson's grumbling wizened gag-monster and even Moebius's pudgy, caricatured Hollywood tyrannosaur. The melodramatic blood and thunder, and the book's only real weight, fires William Stout's and Jim Steranko's dynamically moody renditions of Bradbury's genre classics "A Sound of Thunder" and "The Foghorn". As might be expected from the artist who made his mark indelibly with last year's excellent showcase book **The Dinosaurs** [also Bantam, and yet another Byron Preiss package], Stout's cover painting and masterful pen and ink time travel pieces have the greatest impact for those who like their dinosaurs larger-than-life and believably malevolent... while Steranko accomplishes the volume's neatest trick by capturing all the haunting beauty and power of "The Foghorn" with nary a hint of the melancholy monster lurking in his artwork.

"Sounds like music and sounds like flying tents filled the sky, and those were pterodactyls soaring with cavernous gray wings, gigantic bats out of a delerium and a night fever." Ray Bradbury's classic time-travel tale "A Sound of Thunder", as seen by William Stout.

GRASS ROOTS

OHIO COMICS

BY LARRY BLAKE

Jerry Seigal, Joe Shuster, Harvey Peker, L.B. Kellog, Mitch Sonoda, Jim Pack, Tom Mandrake, Milt Caniff, Russ Ferryman, Mike Robinson, Rick McCollum, Larry Nibert, Tom Cameron, Rick Magyar and myself; Larry Blake.

Ranging from the guys who started it all to total unknowns, these are all people from Ohio who create comic books or strips. I'm sure there are plenty I've left out just because **I** don't know about them. It wasn't intentional, folks. I'll include an address at the end of this so you can yell at me about it. This lack of knowledge, on my part, concerning my fellow comics people bothers me.

Now, I'm an Ohioan. I've also been doing my own comics of varying types and print runs for 13 years. If I don't know what is going on in my own state, then people in other areas may not know **anything** is going on. **That** is really depressing and frustrating.

Magnify this by 50 states, and you get thousands of people plugging away for years, for the most part...unnoticed. Even with the increasing numbers of titles and new markets opening up, a lot of very fine work goes largely unseen by fandom as a whole. Self-publishing is only part of the answer and it can be time and money consuming. [Often prohibitively so.] Advertising and distribution can weed out all but the very financially well off. The sad reality —talent isn't a respecter of wealth.

Every artist or writer wants and needs to reach the largest audience possible. That is what it's all about. Otherwise we are talking to ourselves. When Hal Schuster and the **Comics Feature** offered me this space to talk about Ohio comics, I jumped at the chance, gratefully. [Though I don't consider myself a writer, and wasn't quite sure how to go about the whole thing.]

Limited then, by knowledge and space, I've chosen several representative creators and their work to tell you about. They and I have been at it a long time and have seen fanzines and independant comics come and go, everything from ditto and photocopy to slick, semi-pro packages. Because we love it we have done it.

Larry Nibert began "copying characters from comics when very young". He, Jim Pack and myself got together in 1970. When Larry and I were still in high school, we put together a comic book that was finally printed in '73. Since then, Larry has done newspaper work, attended the Joe Kubert school for a while, runs his own freelance commercial art studio and puts a line of postcards out locally and sponsored and organized our local SpringCon conventions.

Through it all, he still sticks to comics. His work has appeared in various fan magazines including **Space and Time, Dynamite Epitaph, Afterworld, Fanzine '75-'76, Manticore** [published by the Kubert school] and **Comet Tales.** Larry is most known [as is Jim Pack] for his short sf strips, which in Larry's case usually have some streak of subtle or dark humor running through them. In art his strong points are a good sense of layout and design and a smooth, very professional inking style. His latest work is in **Comet Tales #2** [available for $3.65 from Rocket Comics, P.O. Box 233, Dept. D, Loveland, Ohio

45140].

This is also the best current sampler of Ohio comics work, featuring strips by editor/artist Mike Robinson, Mitch Sonoda and myself, as well as by Larry. Printed on 30 lb. white paper, with full color covers by Larry Nibert and Mike Robinson, it is an adults only item limited to 500 individually numbered copies.

Russ Ferryman is another guy who grew up on comics and now does his own. He is impossible to pin down to any one type of character or story. Interested in subjects as diverse as science, history, fine arts and poetry, his work reflects it all, though he is best known for his superhero parody **The Bird Brain**, which he unleashed on the world in '76.

Russ' work is characterized by intense energy, often berserk slapstick and biting satire.

About his beginnings as an artist, Russ says, "I don't remember a time when I didn't have a pencil in my hand." He quotes such early influences as Superman, Zorro, Mighty Mouse, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. His work has also appeared in **Afterworld** and **The Comics Buyer's Guide.** Currently Russ is submitting scripts and story ideas to various companies and is threatening to dazzle his Ohio fans [and hopefully lots more] with the long awaited **Birdbrain #2. (Birdbrain #1** is available in **very** limited quantities from Russ at 231 Xenia Ave., Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387 for $1.50 each.]

Jim Pack has been a big influence on us all. From his first self-published book **Fanzine '75** on...he has never failed to top himself each time out. He has provided an outlet in **Fanzine** for his fellow artists as well. Writing, editing, pencilling, lettering, inking, packaging and publishing, Jim does it all, setting the pace for the rest of us

by example. Jim is an educated and thoughtful writer. [Who will hate this praise.] His stories never fail to entertain or make you think whether you agree with his view points or not. His latest appeared in **Comet Tales #1**, and may still be available from Rocket Comics. Jim teaches commercial art in a Cincinnati vocational school and is also a singer/songwriter in his [scarce] spare time.

Rick McCollum also has a long list of credits. His work has appeared in **Afterworld, Harbinger, Ultrazine, Starslayers, Dark Winds, Algol, Thrust, Space And Time, Comico Primer #3, Ghost Ocean** [a Robert E. Howerd poetry book] and more. Rick is mostly into self-published new wave comix, being responsible for such titles as **Soulsnap #1 & 2, Horde #1-25, Re, Mutant Death In Cincinnati, Journey To Atlantis, Warriors Of The Dawn, Superhero Terror #1-9, New Wave Heroes #1-3** and more.

Rick's work is highly decorative. He has a strong fondness for mythological subjects. Aside from all the comics already mentioned, Rick teaches art at the Cincinnati Community Center and does freelance commercial art on occasion.

Rick, like the other Ohio artists, has been drawing for most of his life. His formal training includes fine arts, drafting and commercial instruction. He has a BFA from the College of Design, Art and Architecture of the University of Cincinnati and credits a lot of his influence to studying art history. Rick also writes, paints and "stalks around Cincinnati late at night".

Goals? Same as all of us. "To make a living exclusively by drawing comics."

So, there you have it. An introduction to, and a little background on several Ohio artists. They and I hope perhaps something here will catch your attention and lead you into investigating both Ohio comics and your local scene. There are many strange and wonderful pen and ink worlds out there, all over the country, just waiting for you, the comics fan, to come looking for them. Go ahead, you won't regret it...tell 'em I sent you.

To write to me send your letters to Larry Blake, care of **Comics Feature**, 1518 E. Fowler Avenue, Tampa, FL 33612.

Guide

Contined from page 14

Titles shipping March 13, on sale April 5

☐ **Justice League Of America #28**—Conway and Tuska.

☐ **Wonder Woman #317**—Mishkin and Heck.

☐ **Blackhawk #271**—No information available.

☐ **DC Comics Presents #71**—Superman teams up with Bizarro to save Earth. Bridwell, Swan and Hunt.

☐ **Fury Of Firestorm #25**—Return of Black Bison. Conway and Kayanan.

☐ **Best Of DC Digest #50**

☐ **Vigilante #8**—No information available. Direct Market Only. Baxter paper.

☐ **Atari Force #7**—Writer Conway, pencils and cover Garcia Lopez and inks by Villagran.

☐ **Sword Of The Atom Special**—Written by Strnad and pencils and inks by Kane.

Shipping Date March 20 on sale April 12

☐ **Arak, Son of Thunder #35**—Arak as a boy. Thomas writer, Randall pencils and cover and Magyar inks.

☐ **Batman #373**—The Scarecrow is back. Written by Moench, pencils by Colan, inks by Alcala and cover by Hannigan and Giordano.

☐ **The Flash #335**—Pied Piper continues psychological warfare. Written by Bates, pencils and cover by Infantino and inks by McLaughlin.

☐ **G.I. Combat #267**—Written by Kanigher and pencils by Giffen.

☐ **Superman #397**—Written by Kupperberg and pencils and inks by Barreto.

☐ **The New Teen Titans #44**—Introduction of Nightwing. Written by Wolfman, penciled by Perez, inked by Giordano and cover by Perez.

☐ **Omega Man #16**—No information available. Direct Market Only. Baxter paper.

☐ **Star Trek #6**—No information available.

☐ **New Gods #2**—Part 2 of reprint series by Jack Kirby. Direct Market Only, Baxter paper.

☐ **The Saga of the Swamp Thing #26**—Second part of Demon Quest-

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ATARI FORCE

star trilogy. Written by Moore, pencils by Bissette, inks by Totleben and cover by Bissette and Totleben.

☐ **Batman & The Outsiders #12**—Secret origin of Katana. Written by Barr and pencils, inks and cover by Aparo.

☐ **Green Lantern #178**—The secret of The Predator. Written by Wein and penciled, inked and cover by Gibbons.

☐ **Sgt. Rock #390**—The story of an unknown soldier. Written by Kanigher, pencils and inks by Redondo and cover by Kubert.

☐ **Supergirl #21**—Written by Kupperberg and pencils and inks by Barreto.

☐ **The Warlord #83**—Written by Burkett and pencils by Jurgens.

☐ **Thriller #9**—Written by Fleming and pencils by Von Eeden. Direct Sales Only, Baxter paper.

☐ **Infinity Inc. #5**—Good men are turned bad by "The Stream of Ruthlessness." Written by Thomas, penciled by Ordway and inked by Machlan. Direct Sales Only, Baxter paper.

☐ **New Talent Showcase #7**—Direct Sales Only.

Titles shipping April 3, on sale April 26

☐ **Super Powers Mini-Series #1**—Plots and covers by Jack Kirby.

☐ **Legion Of Super-Heroes #313**—Written by Levitz, pencils by Giffen, inks by Mahlstedt and cover by Giffen and Mahlstedt.

☐ **Action #557**—Terra-Man and a multi-million-dollar art heist. Written by Kupperberg and penciled by Swan.

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KIRBY'S NEW GODS

Detective #540—Written by Moench, penciled by Colan, inked by Smith, Green Arrow back-up by Cavalieri and McManus and cover by Colan and Giordano.

☐ **World's Finest #305**—No information available.

☐ **All-Star Squadron #35**—Conclusion of the origin of the Freedom Fighters. Written by Thomas, penciled by Hoberg, inks by Collins and cover by Hoberg and Ordway.

☐ **Arion, Lord Of Atlantis #21**—Written by Kupperberg, penciled by Duursema and inks by Smith.

☐ **Superboy #55**—Jonathan Kent is arrested for murder. Written by Kupperberg and penciled by Schaffenberger.

☐ **Sun Devils #1 Maxi-Series**—Written by Conway, penciled by Jurgens and inked by Magyar. Direct Sales Only, Baxter paper.

☐ **Teen Titans Annual #3**—Completes Terra/Terminator story.

☐ **Camelot 3000 #12**—Direct Sales Only, Baxter paper.

☐ **Blue Devil #2**—No information available.

☐ **Firestorm Graphic Novel**—Written by Conway, penciled by Broderick.

AARDVARK VANAHEIM INC.

☐ **Cerebus #60**—Black and white.

☐ **Normalman #2**

☐ **Journey #8**—Black and white.

AMERICOMICS

☐ **Black Diamond #6**—Black Diamond tries to stop the Fourth Reich and Colt confronts Tara concerning jewel thefts. Ed Stehlin, Don Secrease and Kevin Dzuban.

☐ **Nightveil #3**—Nightveil returns to Earth dimension for a showdown with Reverend Irons. Steve Ringgenberg, Mark Heike, Bill Anderson, Rik Levins and Kevin Dzuban. Cover by Paul Gulacy.

Archie

☐ **Betty & Veronica Spectacular #537**

☐ **Betty & Veronica #330**

☐ **Jughead #334**

☐ **Laugh #383**

☐ **Archie At Riverdale High #97**

☐ **Archie & Me #145**

☐ **Archie's TV Laughout #95**

☐ **The Fly**—Things get worse for Thomas Troy as he meets a new villain. By Ditko and Snyder.

☐ **The Original Shield #2**—The continuation of Shield's origin plus his partner's origin. Written by Martin L. Greim, art by Dick Ayers and Rex Lindsey and cover by Rudy Nebres.

☐ **Blue Ribbon #9**—The premiere of Agent of Atlantis by Mark Menhart, interior pencil Malcolm Davis, inking by Ricardo Villagran and cover by Buckler and Villagran.

☐ **Katy Keene #4**

☐ **Archie Comics Digest #66**

☐ **Jughead Jones Digest #29**

☐ **Archie Where Are You Digest #32**

CAPITAL Publications Inc.

☐ **Whisper #3**—Whisper must battle her own stepfather. Story by Steven Grant, art by Rich Larson and colors by Les Dorscheid. Baxter paper.

Comico

☐ **Comico Primer #7**—Black and white.

☐ **Grendel #5**—Black and white.

☐ **Evangeline #2**

☐ **Mage #2**

CONTINUITY COMICS

☐ **Echo of Future Past #1**—Continuing strips aimed at pleasing the adult audience include "Mudwogs", "Tippy Toe Jones", who has the truth thrust upon him, constantly plus the meeting of Frankenstein/Wolfman/Dracula. Neal Adams, Arthur Suydam, Lindley Farley, Louis Mitchell, Cory Adams, Larry Hama, Michael Golden and Jean Teule.

EAGLE COMICS

☐ **Judge Dredd #9**—Man-eating alien Kleggs arrive and Judge Cal pronounces death on the entire population of Mega-City. Written by John Wegner and art by Brian Bolland, Mike McMahon and Dave Gibbons.

☐ **Judge Dredd #10**—Continues

the story started in #9. Written by John Wagner and drawn by Brian Bolland, Mike McMahon, Brett Ewins and Garry Leach.

☐ **Zot #1**—Zot comes from a neighboring dimension. By Scott McLeod. Baxter Paper.

☐ **Aztec Ace #2**—The Aztec Ace fights the Ebonati through time as they try to redirect history. By Moench, Hernandez and Redondo. Baxter paper.

☐ **Star Reach Classics #1**—Stories by Jim Starlin and Dave Sim, cover by Frank Cirocco.

☐ **Sabre #8**—Conclusion of year-long story by McGregor, Graham and B. Miller. Baxter paper.

☐ **DNAgents #11**—A black box holds the Earth for ransom. By Evanier, Meugniot and Gordon. Baxter paper.

☐ **Eclipse Monthly #7**—Baxter Paper

☐ **Ms. Tree #8**—Ms. Tree battles the Muerta gang. Max Allan Collins, Terry Beatty and Gary Keto.

☐ **American Flagg #10**—The new Plexus Ranger orders get Reuben Flagg. By Howard Chaykin.

☐ **E-Man #16**—E-Man has several life and death choices to make. Written and penciled by Joe Staton and inked by Rick Burchett.

☐ **Starslayer #18**—Starslayer meets Grimjack. John Ostrander writer and Timothy Truman artist.

☐ **Mars #7**—World War on Mars. Mark Wheatley and Marc Hempel.

☐ **Jon Sable #14**—Jon Sable helps a defecting Russian ballet dancer retrieve his wife. Written, penciled and inked by Mike Grell.

☐ **Warp #14**—Eleven wizards combine their powers to save Fen-re from the evil Demons of Dis. Written by Peter Gillis, pencilled by Jerry Bingham and inked by Mike Gustovich.

☐ **Probe #1**—Space-fantasy saga by Frank Turner.

☐ **3-D Alien Worlds #1**—Three dimensional full color stories set on alien worlds with adult themes. Written by Bruce Jones and edited by Jones and April Campbell.

☐ **Sun-Runners #3**—Roger McKenzie and Patrick Broderick.

☐ **Vanguard Illustrated #5**—Cover by Michael Kaluta.

☐ **Pacific Presents #4**—Inkers Ian Akin and Brian Garvey.

☐ **Demon Dreams #2**—By Arthur Suydam.

☐ **Groo Special #1**—Sergio Aragones and Mark Evanier.

☐ **Code Name: Strike Force #1**

☐ **Justice Machine Vol 2 #3**

☐ **Vortex #7**—Black and white

☐ **Warrior #18**—Black and white

LAST CHANCE

MARVEL

February 7 shipping

- ☐ The Thing #12
- ☐ Daredevil #207
- ☐ New Mutants #16
- ☐ Kitty & Wolverine #1
- ☐ The Secret War #2
- ☐ Kazar #32
- ☐ Dr. Strange Classics #4

February 14 shipping

- ☐ Amazing Spider-Man #253
- ☐ Captain America #294
- ☐ Mighty Thor #344
- ☐ Indiana Jones #18
- ☐ Dr. Strange #65
- ☐ U.S. 1 #10
- ☐ Savage Sword Of Conan #100

February 21 shipping

- ☐ Marvel Age #15
- ☐ Incredible Hulk #296
- ☐ Avengers #244
- ☐ Conan The Barbarian #159
- ☐ Marvel Tales #164
- ☐ X-Men #182
- ☐ Rom #55
- ☐ G.I. Joe #24
- ☐ Dreadstar #10
- ☐ Powermen/Iron Fist #106
- ☐ Graphic Novel #11: Heartburst

February 28 shipping

- ☐ Fantastic Four #287
- ☐ Marvel Teamup #142
- ☐ Iron Man #183
- ☐ Peter Parker #91
- ☐ New Defenders #132
- ☐ Star Wars #84
- ☐ Alpha Flight #11
- ☐ Hercules #4
- ☐ What If #45
- ☐ Alien Legion #1

DC

February 14 shipping

- ☐ Justice League #227
- ☐ Wonder Woman #316
- ☐ Atari Force #6
- ☐ DC Comics Presents #70
- ☐ Fury Of Firestorm #24
- ☐ Best Of DC Digest #49
- ☐ Vigilante #7

February 21 shipping

- ☐ Batman #372
- ☐ Flash #334

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- ☐ G.I. Combat #266
- ☐ Superman #396
- ☐ Arak/Son Of Thunder #34
- ☐ New Teen Titans #43
- ☐ Star Trek #5
- ☐ Omega Men #15
- ☐ New Gods #1

February 28 shipping

- ☐ Green Lantern #177
- ☐ Sgt. Rock #389
- ☐ Batman & The Outsiders #11
- ☐ Supergirl #20
- ☐ Saga Of Swamp Thing #25
- ☐ Warlord #32
- ☐ Thriller #6
- ☐ Infinity Inc. #4
- ☐ New Talent Showcase #6

March 6 shipping

- ☐ Action Comics #556
- ☐ Detective Comics #539
- ☐ Jonah Hex #86
- ☐ Legion of Super Heroes #312
- ☐ World's Finest #304
- ☐ All-Star Squadron #34
- ☐ Arion/Lord Of Atlantis #20
- ☐ Blue Devil #1
- ☐ Superboy #54

AC COMICS

- ☐ Captain Paragon #3

ARCHIE COMICS

- ☐ Archie #329
- ☐ Mighty Crusaders #7
- ☐ Pep #394
- ☐ Life With Archie #242
- ☐ Steel Sterling #6
- ☐ Archie's Pals 'N Gals #169
- ☐ Blue Ribbon #8
- ☐ Betty & Me #139
- ☐ Everything's Archie #111
- ☐ Laugh Comics Digest #52
- ☐ Betty & Veronica Comics Digest #8
- ☐ Jughead With Archie Digest #62
- ☐ Archie Double Digest #10

CAPITAL COMICS

- ☐ Badger #4

EAGLE COMICS

- ☐ Judge Dredd #8
- ☐ Robo-Hunter #3

ECLIPSE COMICS

- ☐ DNAgents #10
- ☐ Eclipse Monthly #6
- ☐ Destroyer Duck #6

FIRST COMICS

- ☐ American Flagg #7
- ☐ Starslayer #17
- ☐ E-Man #15
- ☐ Warp Special #3
- ☐ Joe Babis #13
- ☐ Mars #8

GUILD

- ☐ Southern Knights

KITCHEN SINK

- ☐ Spirit #3

PACIFIC COMICS

- ☐ Twisted Tales #8
- ☐ Vanity #1
- ☐ Silver Heels #3
- ☐ Somerset Holmes #4
- ☐ Vanguard Illustrate #4
- ☐ Fall Of The House Of Usher

TEXAS COMICS

- ☐ Elementals #2

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- ☐ Judge Dredd #10.....$1.50
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Publishers Picks

Action Comics #554 would make a glorious swansong for any creative team. The concept is imaginative and it very successfully breaks out of the mold of the book. Art is, as usual, above average. Marv Wolfman and Gil Kane present a story set in a world without a Superman, in fact with precious few real heroes of any sort. The story concerns how mankind must invent a superman if there wasn't one and the real heroes of the piece are two characters by the names of Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel. A far piece from the days when DC Comics tried to pretend the men didn't exist.

Sable #11 and **Ms. Tree #5** deserve mention virtually every issue. These are by far the two most intelligent and creative books on the stands today. And both Max Collins and Mike Grell are two of the nicest people one could hope to talk to. I recently spoke with Mike for **Daredevils** magazine (Issue #3) and his approach to his work clearly illustrates why it is so good. Collins is one of our regular columnists (although this unabashed plug is not for that reason —but because I really look forward to his book). No one constructs characters quite as well as these two men whose roots are more deeply in the comic strip than the comic book. Maggie, the Cat, in this issue of **Sable** is as well constructed a personality as any that Caniff or Gray could offer while the pacing of **Ms. Tree** equals the best (if only publisher Mullaney would drop his own weak strip to make room for the lady detective) although the cover is needlessly titillating (but I suppose that too is in the tradition of the hardbitten detective—Spillane, take a bow).

Now for the best book offered by the two major comic book companies... **All-Star Squadron #32** continues to offer the excellent craft of Roy Thomas coupled with the nostalgic evocation of bygone days present in Rick Hoberg's art. Ever since the old JSA members were popped back into the book this has been one of the few comics I look forward to every month. The current storyline brings back even more Golden Age characters as the origin of the Freedom Fighters is offered, slightly rewriting DC continuity, but to good effect. At least one JSA mini-series is planned to tie in with this book and, of course, there is always **Infinity, Inc.** with an excellent third issue I just read in black and white. Has anyone noticed how similar superhero costumes look without color, in fact even with color? [Thanks to DC for sending on this xerox copy.]

Bill Mantlo is on a roll again as both **Rom** and **The Hulk** seem to be rapidly improving in quality and they are once again becoming readable. Hulk is smashing again in #295 but with a difference. It seems his experiments are turning up lots of other Hulks who are running about loose, dogs, kids, women, men, the whole bit. Sounds silly, but so far it seems to work. While over at Rom everyone is trying to figure out where all of the superheroes have gone, Rom has finally convinced the country to beware the wraiths and President Reagan goes on television....

Marvel Super Heroes: The Secret Wars is explained in more detail elsewhere in this issue but worth mentioning here nonetheless. Marvel has made a calculated effort to present a book which will be their biggest commercial success. They have coldly and calculatedly planned a series which every reader of any Marvel comic book will be forced to buy thereby loading their corporate coffers. They have succeeded.

The Man With The Silver Star, a Lieutenant Blueberry Adventure is a book that you won't find in your usual newsstand or even at most bookstores for that matter. But it is worth seeking out. Published by Dargaud International it is a reprint of the European graphic album created by J.M. Charlier and J. Giraud. As such it is written for adults (although definitely not pornographic), intelligently crafted, excellently packaged and well worth the ticket. The story reads much like a Clint Eastwood western and is quite a bit of fun. By the way, Giraud also draws under the pen name of Moebius.

Signal From Space is finally out from Kitchen Sink Press. The book is by Will Eisner and something of a sequel to **Contact With God** [released some years back from Baronet] with material that originally appeared in **Spirit Magazine** although redrawn and now in color. It is not your usual story but a realistic and gritty tale of man's first receipt of a signal from intelligent life in outer space. Eisner is the master he always is and the book is an essential edition to every discerning reader's library.

First he designed the new Legion of Superheroes almost a decade ago. Then he went on to create the visual look of the New X-Men. Now it's the Futurians and Dave Cockrum is in his stride once again. Offered as the ninth Marvel Graphic Novel the cast of characters is quite interesting and the story moves reasonably well. Although it isn't about to light the world afire, if a series develops from this one do keep an eye out for it.

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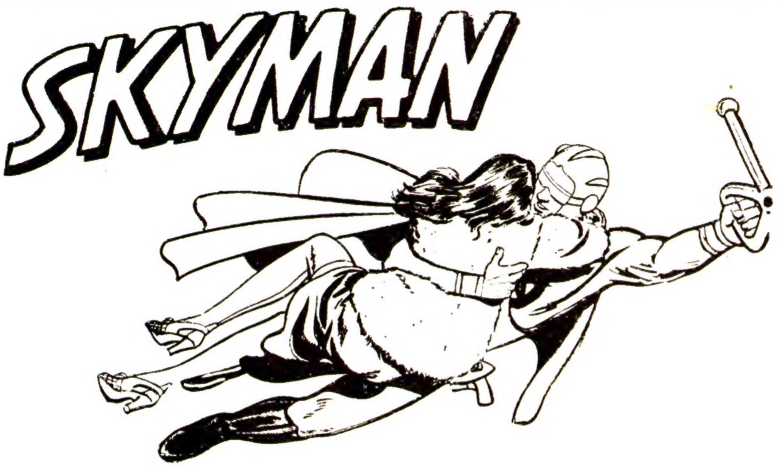

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